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Palestinian Leaders Discuss the New Challenges for the Resistance

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Darwish: It is a pleasure for the Research Center and *Palestine Affairs** to welcome the leaders of the Resistance organizations to this panel discussion that will hopefully throw light on the present period which is replete with ambiguities and uncertainties.

Where are we headed?

Posed in the course of changing events, this question is not, as it may seem, a difficult and misleading one if we examine it from a future-oriented perspective, i.e., in terms of long-term revolutionary strategic goals.

However, at the present stage, this question becomes perplexing, debatable and subject to different interpretations. Yet the Resistance has been devoting itself to the study of the new situation in a democratic atmosphere in order to reach a common decision. Our meeting here is the most notable indica-

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tor of the soundness and open-mindedness of our political thinking as we deliberate on our future. What seem to be differences in viewpoints are, in fact, diverse approaches to the same agreed upon goal — the necessity of continuing the Revolution. The numerous discussions by the rank and file of the Resistance have contributed to a broader understanding of our situation and of the options that have presented themselves.

Do we break through this stage by rejecting, or not rejecting, accepting or not accepting the proposed solutions, or should we offer those proposals which would not have the effect of restricting our freedom of action in the present or future? How do we reconcile the ambiguity of this interval with the clarity of our goal? What are the possible alternatives that we can propose and realize?

The Palestinian position is still under study and consideration. The Arab masses, trusting in the Palestinian Revolution, are aware of the restraints on and the throes of arriving at such a decision.

Yet the following questions are relevant. What are the general outlines of the Palestinian political orientation at this juncture? Where are we heading? By what means? We are confident that this panel can answer many questions that have been raised as the participants are heads of the major Resistance organizations.

May I now suggest the following questions as a guide for discussion?:

1. The various regional and international transformations that have resulted from the October war and which have left an imprint on our movement: Do we, in the first place, endorse them? What is their effect on Palestinian strategy and action? Do they demand a reconsideration of our concepts? Do they necessitate the adoption of a stage-by-stage implementation of our goals? Do they contradict our historical right to Palestine?

2. Assessment of the new stage within the context of the Geneva Conference: Will it lead to a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict? Where do we stand with respect to Arab

political moves for Israeli withdrawal? Do we reject or approve? If we reject, are we capable of stopping them? If we approve, do we join them? What does the designation of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people mean when others have contested its claim? What is the Palestinian position on all this? What is the Palestinian option?

3. What stand ought to be taken on the future status of Palestinian occupied territories after Israeli withdrawal? Here there are two possibilities: either the return to Jordan or the establishment of a Palestinian national authority. What does the second possibility mean? Which of the two alternatives will bring us closer to achieving the goals of the Revolution and realizing its rights to Palestinian territory?

Nayef Hawatmeh

The October war was not a passing event in Palestinian and Arab history. It can certainly be understood in terms of the conditions it produced. It was a limited patriotic war conducted along the political and class lines of its leadership, specifically along the national bourgeois lines which Sadat represents. It aimed at breaking the deadlock of «no war, no peace» hoping to create new opportunities that would lead to a political settlement based on United Nations resolution 242 while stipulating the recognition of the national rights of the Palestinian people instead of «a just settlement of the refugee problem.»

We knew when the war broke out that it would not succeed in attaining anything more than the enhancement of the opportunity for settlement. In spite of this realization, the Palestinian Revolution joined the war from the beginning and endeavoured to transform it into a national liberation war capable of regaining the Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and unconditionally securing the unconditional right of the Palestinian people to self-determination on its restored territory.

The Palestinian Revolution struggled to commit all Arab

potentialities to the war effort. It proposed a number of moves that should be undertaken: «Commit all Arab Armies to battle, ... open the Jordanian Front, ... let the forces of the Revolution go into Israel through Jordan, ... use the oil weapon, ... nationalize oil, ... withdraw Arab funds which back the dollar, ...» However, all the attempts made to have them implemented were thwarted.

On October 16, Sadat declared his readiness to accept the ceasefire. In this way, the war remained a limited one aiming at a political settlement bound by U.N. resolution 242 both in its minimalist and maximalist interpretations. Thus, Sadat maintained both the political and military initiative in his hands.

The October war brought forth new developments and a new situation which placed the Arabs in a stronger position to engage in a political settlement. They included: near balance of Arab-Israeli forces, a jolt to the Israeli theory of security, hard blows to the imperialist Israeli military apparatus, the capability of the Arab armies to use modern weapons effectively and to fight efficiently, the ability to employ Arab weapons in offensive tactics (contrary to the pre-war notion that they were defensive only), the emergence of Palestinian and Arab mass morale, and overall popular semi-insurrections in occupied Palestinian territory against Zionist occupation.

Besides, the October war and the oil weapon (within the limits of its use) generated international pressure to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. The socialist countries steadfastly and effectively stood by the Arab national liberation movement materially, militarily, and politically. Moreover, the consequences of the war forced capitalist Western Europe to revise its position on Middle Eastern issues because its interests were endangered. It realized that they lay with the Arabs; thus, it persistently put pressure on American imperialism and Israel to reach some sort of accomodation with the Arabs. Japanese imperialism did likewise. At the same time, some sectors inside the United States were demanding a reconsideration of American interests which did not necessarily coincide with the Israeli Zionist position.

All of these changes indicate an impending settlement. This has been confirmed in Resistance contacts with Arab and friendly international forces. As shown by the course of events, there is more than one form of settlement within the framework of U.N. resolution 242. One of them is the liquidationist American-Zionist-Hashemite scheme which precludes the return to the lines of June 4, 1967. Instead it calls for the establishment of the United Arab Kingdom which, in effect, would have meant the suppression of the Palestinian independent national character. Moreover, American-Israeli strategic plans have aimed at reaching bilateral settlements with each of the Arab states.

Within the Arab camp, there are two other interpretations of what a political settlement entails. The Egyptian interpretation stipulates total Israeli withdrawal from Arab and Palestinian territories occupied in June 1967 and some form of recognition of the national rights of the Palestinian people. Yet, despite its declatory position, Egypt is ready for a bilateral settlement even if its own interpretation is not implemented.

The Syrian position differs in that it demands total withdrawal from the territories occupied in June 1967 and afterwards, as well as the recognition of the national rights of the Palestinian people. Moreover, unlike Egypt, Syria has refused to enter a bilateral political settlement.

The position of the U.S.S.R. calls for a settlement within the framework of resolution 242 which would replace the mere recognition of a just settlement of the refugee problem with the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people. It envisions their national rights in accordance with U.N. resolutions.

This was made clear to our delegation in Moscow. Furthermore, it calls for a complete Israeli withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in the 1967 June war. On the other hand, all settlements based on the American-Zionist-Hashemite scheme will lead to a submissive, liquidationist solution of the Palestine question. Our attitude towards the other parties which have no precise definition of the national rights of the Palestinian people

will be determined by the degree of support for these rights. We will oppose all obstacles that would impede their realization. Such an opposition necessarily demands a concrete, nationalist and revolutionary position that will guarantee the thwarting of all submissive, liquidationist solutions. Such a stand would undermine settlements which seek to nullify the present and historical rights of our people to all of its national homeland. It would also involve struggling to liberate Arab and Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. It is, moreover, consistent with our strategic goal of liberating all of Palestine. At the same time, it would enable the Palestinian people in all those liberated territories evacuated by the enemy to exercise their right to self-determination and establish a Palestinian independent national authority. The mobilization of our masses inside and outside the occupied territories along these lines is required, because it would serve the general strategy of liberating all of the national homeland in the ensuing stages.

A corresponding Arab position would be necessitated on the part of the Arab patriotic regimes, the forces of the Arab liberation movement, and friendly countries to undermine American-Hashemite-Zionist schemes that seek partial or bilateral settlements. We have a direct obligation to struggle against «solutions» which serve in the end to liquidate the Palestinian cause, suppress the Palestinian national identity and character, or once more, allow Palestinian territory to be annexed, either within the framework of Israeli expansionism or the United Arab Kingdom. Any such solution would be based on the theory of dual security in the interest of Israel and the Arab states which have concluded such a settlement. The Palestinian Revolution would be exposed to the threat of liquidation and all of its national achievements would be jeopardized, leading to a stabilization and freezing of the Arab-Israeli conflict and a return to the conditions obtaining from 1948 to 1967. Another result would be the freezing of the Arab-Israeli conflict by ending the state of belligerency between the Arab states and Israel.

Linking the rejection of submissive liquidationist schemes

with definite programs aids in mobilizing the masses and the Arab national liberation movement. We will induce our people to take more radical positions when they have a solid base of action on which they and the Revolution can stand, and bring the dispersed masses together to preserve all of their national achievements obtained through revolution and armed struggle. This base would be more conducive to the organization of the struggle against the Zionist enemy. Our opposition to liquidationist schemes would acquire a concrete and overall content. It is not sufficient to adopt a position calling for struggle without formulating specific programs.

I would like to conclude by talking about the Geneva conference. We are determined to end Zionist occupation and to enable our people to control their land and set up a national authority. Our position on the Geneva Conference will be determined in the light of events. If they are headed in the direction of a submissive liquidationist solution, we will necessarily oppose the Conference. So far, neither the Palestinian Revolution nor the P.L.O. has been invited to Geneva. We are involved in a struggle over who should determine the destiny of the Revolution, the Palestinian people and the occupied Palestinian territories — we, King Hussein or the Arab states. This question has not been decided yet. King Hussein's delegation is in Geneva presenting itself as the representative of the Palestinian people. It is determined to decide the fate of occupied Palestinian territories and the Palestine question. However, it must be recognized that the Palestinian Revolution and the P.L.O. are the representatives and determiners of the destiny of the Palestinian people. By obtaining such a recognition, the Palestinian Revolution will have a direct effect on the Conference, which would lead to the collapse of the Conference if the trend is towards the imposition of submissive liquidationist solutions. This is because if the P.L.O., the recognized representative of the Palestinian people, rejects the Conference, then it would have thwarted the plans of all other parties after they have actually recognized it as such.

It is well known that Egypt has asked us to declare our posi-

tion, so have Syria, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. If the P.L.O. were to take either a negative or a positive position before obtaining the recognition that it is actually the representative of the Palestinian people, then it would not be serving its interests, strategy, or tactics. Moreover, if we decide to upset the Geneva talks, we would be in a better position to do so only after it has acquired recognition.

Even if the Revolution undertakes the experiment of international circles, declaring that the rights of its people are such and such, Israel, imperialist forces, and the Hashemites will not acknowledge the legitimate and national rights of the Palestinian people. With these givens, the conference cannot but break down.

We have declared more than once and persistently affirm that we should not wage a visionary struggle with the question of participation at Geneva as the decisive issue for it is not the essence of the struggle. Rather it is how we can elaborate a concrete program enabling us to thwart submissive liquidationist actions and Hashemite annexationist or Israeli expansionist schemes.

This program, which should be capable of strengthening the national positions on the battlefield, could also launch a stubborn defense against reactionary and imperialist pressures and bilateral solutions.

Taking positions based on negative, verbal opposition and indulging in freewheeling pronouncements rather than determining what we exactly want at this stage will not enable us to thwart attempts at submissive liquidationist solutions; on the contrary, it would serve their interests.

We can combat these solutions and obtain this recognition only after elaborating a concrete program. Only then will our stand have a resonance and an effect on the future of the area. Let us take the initiative.

Mahmoud Darwish clarified the true difficulty of the Arab and Palestinian struggle by his well-chosen phrase «the throes of arriving at a Palestinian decision.» It has been rendered difficult because after the last war, we have had to take responsibility for the first time, specifying programs and goals in a way that would combine our principles with realism.

Before the last war our thoughts about the struggle against Zionism were romantic. We never specified what we wanted. This was both logical and natural, because for twenty-five years we have suffered successive defeats. We wanted war for its own sake, to instil in us the spirit of fighting rather than to seek crystal-clear goals by stages. Feelings of impotence dominated all of our actions and thinking.

After the last war, inner changes began to take place. It was no longer acceptable for the Arab nation and the Palestinian national movement to remain prisoners of romantic notions. Both had to specify, for the first time, what they wanted within realistic limits. Possibly, this is why we fought and won for the first time; however, we are now facing more difficult experiences than when we were vanquished and inept. Our thought was excessively romantic because we wanted to fight. We were not sufficiently concerned with the political consequences which naturally follow wars. Neither the Palestinian leadership nor other non-ruling, patriotic leaders outside Egypt made specific pre-assessments of the possible outcomes of the war. Wars always end in either victory, defeat, or a balance. Naturally, each of these three possibilities has political consequences which we must know and appraise so as not to find ourselves overwhelmed by events, as happened in the last war.

Now that we have proven to ourselves and to the world our military capabilities and economic prowess, we can specify clearly what we want because we are not only facing ourselves but the world at large. We have emerged from the stage of despair and romantic struggle into that of clear and specific programs. Even

opting for a new war, which in my opinion should be at the top of any list of future plans, entails specifying immediate goals — for what the Zionist entity has achieved over decades and in a number of wars cannot be wiped out in a single day.

It will take other wars and a number of years to liberate Palestine completely. Since the Zionist presence grew step-by-step in power and size, so the process of its elimination will, likewise, have to be a gradual one. This is the real situation, not as we imagine it in our dreams.

Thus, the October war changed the course of the Arab-Zionist conflict, perhaps not in a decisive, but nevertheless in a very important way. Because the war and its results must be taken into consideration, we must alter our pre-war plans, programs and means of action. I am emphasizing this point because there are some in responsible positions, even possibly among Palestinians, who still think with a pre-war mentality.

Before the October war, U.N. resolution 242 was the maximum limit for realizing Arab aspirations in any settlement. At present, this resolution can no longer play the same role. Concessions which we were ready to grant before the war in order to implement resolution 242 can no longer be considered because the balance of power has changed and we are now more capable of continuing the struggle, particularly armed struggle. Arab aspirations and means of struggle must therefore change according to developments through which the region is passing. The American-Israeli-Hashemite scheme, to which comrade Hawatmeh referred, and which aims at implementing a settlement consistent with pre-war conditions, can only be foiled by establishing a counter-front composed of the U.S.S.R., Egypt, Syria, and the P.L.O. It should draw up a minimalist program which would realize our provisional demands on the Arab and Palestinian levels. It should also decide on the maximal concessions that the Arab nation can afford. Without the solid commitment of the members of this opposing front, it will not be easy to block attempts at bilateral settlements and the high political costs of submissive solutions. Solidarity is required to prevent the giving

up of fundamental concessions for secondary acquisitions and to safeguard a solid patriotic position in the face of those attempts which seek to restore the region to the *status quo ante*.

It is the duty, therefore, of the patriotic forces to concentrate at this stage on halting Egypt's participation in the proceedings of the Geneva Conference because in the absence of an agreed-upon strategy that would unify our friends in a front, Egypt's continuation alone will lead it into the trap of bilateral settlements and fundamental concessions. If Egypt falls or is allowed to fall into the trap, the region will be faced with a greater predicament and will be less equipped to confront the imperialist-Zionist machinations because it will have lost one of its basic and important elements in the confrontation with the enemy. I believe that any Arab participation in the Geneva Conference must be delayed until after the determination of a minimal program to which all parties could commit themselves in a unified manner, without allowing any one of them to negotiate separately.

One cannot reject or accept any form of political activity absolutely. Rejection or acceptance is based on an assessment of its capability to realize tangible results for our specified, immediate programs. Any form of rejection after the war should be different from that before when we were in a state of paralysis. Then, it was difficult for any leadership or patriotic movement to do anything. Even if we were given three-fourths of Palestine, we would have considered any form of acceptance as a form of liquidation and defeatism. If the leadership had agreed to these offers, then it would have found itself in a critical position. Since the war, a new feeling has emerged characterized by a more realistic determination to continue the struggle and realize successive achievements.

I do not think that the fundamental problem that the Palestinian Revolution is facing, albeit a significant one, is that of King Hussein. The fundamental issue is the likelihood that the state of belligerency between the Arab states and Israel may terminate with the conclusion of a settlement. Under the new

circumstances, our movement will not be able to continue its struggle. To elaborate on this point, I should present the historical dimensions of the struggle of the Palestinian people.

From 1948 until the early 1960s, the Palestinians did not deem it necessary to have a national movement independent of the Arab liberation movement. The idea of liberating and restoring Palestine as well as ending the Zionist presence was an Arab nationalist commitment avowed by the regimes and the non-governing national movements. Palestinians joined those patriotic political movements whose goal was to transform the existing systems of government so as to enable them to serve the cause of liberation.

In the early sixties, Arab officialdom, especially Nasser, became convinced that the defeat of Israel was not possible. They sought, however, to keep the Palestinian problem alive. Thus, the idea of reviving the Palestinian entity emerged. It was first discussed in a conference in Chtaura, Lebanon, in 1960. Even Jordan approved the idea of reviving this entity, which evolved into a substitute for the Arab nationalist commitment to the liberation of Palestine. The idea came to fruition in 1964 with the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization designed to serve as a Palestinian political entity and to juxtapose the Israeli existence with a Palestinian one. It should be noted that the ultimate Arab aspiration at that time was to secure the implementation of U.N. resolutions concerning Palestine, including the 1947 Partition Plan.

The June war and its aftermath strengthened already existing tendencies, such as the call for a people's liberation war and armed popular struggle as an alternative to the incompetence of the conventional armies. The P.L.O. thus acquired content; whereas before it had simply been a political instrument. In the years following the June war, the P.L.O. became a symbol of the resilience of the Palestinian people and the continuity of their struggle for the liberation of Palestine. On the other hand, the Arab states, by expressing their determination to liberate the territories occupied in 1967, had, in actuality, given up their

declared previous commitments to liberate all of Palestine, relegating the former task to the Palestinian liberation movement.

The P.L.O. has been able to undertake its struggle in the context of the continuing state of belligerency between the Arabs and Israel. However, if this situation ends, the P.L.O. will not survive as it is. Therefore, we must find a new formula whereby the P.L.O. can continue to function in the likelihood of such an eventuality. It should guarantee the continuation of the Palestine question, prevent the dispersion of the Palestinian people, and guard them from falling prey, once again, to feelings of despair and incompetence. It will also help to avoid the repetition of the experiences of the All-Palestine Government and the Arab Higher Committee, which were lifeless. I am compelled, therefore, to call for the formulation of a clear program which can give rise to an Arab commitment that would oppose the termination of the state of belligerency or that would provide those minimal conditions enabling the Palestinian people to preserve their existence, fighting identity, ability to protect their case, and continuation of their struggle.

The fundamental tactical goal at present should be to prevent the Arab states from ending the state of belligerency in order that it may not obstruct the Palestinian people from persevering in their national cause.

Dr. George Habash:

I have contemplated the questions raised by the Palestine Research Center more than once. I want to congratulate the Center for its discussion format because I think dealing with each question in a scientific and penetrating way enables us to specify those positions which serve the cause of our masses and of the Revolution. Yet I have sharp reservations on the third question (the future of the Palestinian occupied territories).

It is only natural that the first topic should be a discussion of the post - 1973 war developments. It deserves the closest attention. That is why we are here. Before the war, the Eleventh

National Palestinian Congress was convened. It formulated a specific political program focusing on the continuation of the struggle of the Palestinian Revolution. Soon after, the war broke out. Regardless of what Sadat wanted from the war, it created new conditions. Without clarifying their essence, we cannot scientifically plan. I am afraid of a tendency to become overly concerned with major and clear political changes in the region and the world. This is risky, because the war has produced important and valuable results which have not fully emerged as of yet and which may be helpful in seeing more clearly the future course of the Palestinian and Arab revolution.

For the Israelis, the October war has had qualitatively different consequences as compared to those of 1967. This is a point that the leadership of the Palestinian Revolution should contemplate very much. We cannot simply say that the outcome of the Israeli elections strengthened the Zionist hard-line position. We must therefore observe the small questions which are cropping up inside Israeli society itself concerning the soundness of the Zionist enterprise for I think that this is the first time that such doubts have arisen. One such manifestation is a host of new slogans and expressions — «we are Jews, not Zionist» — that are heard and that are inscribed on the walls of Jewish homes in Israel. It may have happened once before, though to a much lesser degree, after the establishment of the United Arab Republic. I recall that this was a topic of discussion in some conferences. These queries have increased since the October war, and we should examine the resultant qualitatively different new state of affairs. Both an immediate and long-range vision is required, for without them the Revolution would lose its resoluteness.

A few days ago, the P.L.O. mouthpiece, *Falastin al-Thawra*, related some of the questions that have been raised by Jewish students. They wondered if the land was really theirs, if their cause was really just and right, and if they had not achieved their goals at the expense of another people's aspirations. I suggest that we ponder over these new developments.

What has happened on the Arab and Palestinian mass levels

since the October war? A comparison between the pre-war situation to that pertaining after it is instructive. The psychological effects of the ugly military defeat of the Six-Day, or rather six-hour, War in 1967 are well known. For the masses, psychological considerations of morale are not far removed from political ones. The June war questioned thereafter the plausibility of the destruction of the State of Israel. A halo surrounded the Israeli military establishment after that war as Zionism and imperialism tried to reinforce the conception of Israeli military superiority in the minds of the masses. Of course the Palestinian Resistance redressed this image to a certain extent. But the masses remained sceptical of the resistance movements' abilities to attain the goal of liberating all of Palestine. Reflection on this point is essential, for the vanguards, who never lose hope, cannot by themselves alter the course of history. It is the masses who do so. If they are not deeply convinced of their ability to crush the Nazi Fascist imperialist racist structure of Israel, it is difficult for them to mobilize all their potentialities.

The October war has created new beliefs in the ranks of the Palestinian and Arab masses. It has brought about Palestinian and Arab unity in a firm way through the state of highest conflict itself; namely, armed combat against our usurping enemy. The Arab masses from Morocco to the Gulf are prepared to make all kinds of sacrifices for the sake of liberating Palestine. This fact should be clear in our minds regardless of the difficulties which we face in this new post-war political situation. We cannot go back to any visionary conception which underestimates the enemy or the power of the hostile Israeli-Zionist-imperialist-reactionary alliance.

If Arab thinkers, writers, and revolutionary organizations clarify the results of the latest war to the Arab masses, they could provide them with a scientific and revolutionary approach which would aid in adopting sound attitudes.

The most important change on the international level is the adoption by imperialism, and especially American imperialism, of a new approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict — to a limited

extent of course. American imperialism seeks to contain events before they reach their limit. After the war, it observed that the balance of power had undergone limited changes and felt compelled to apply relative pressure on Israel to make concessions in a manner which would secure all of its interests and which would also guarantee the survival of the Zionist entity.

If we consider the Soviet point of views which believes, out of friendship, that resolution 242 serves the purposes of the Palestinian and Arab liberation movement, as well as the positions of the European, non-aligned, and African states, we can see that the international community believes that it is in the interests of all of its members to end the tension in the region. Conflict does not serve their interests, nor the interests of international détente, nor the orientation of international politics at this time. The fact that all these international powers are pushing in the direction of a political settlement must not be underestimated.

To this must be added the position of the Arab parties effectively involved in present events, particularly Egypt. In the course of settlement, Egypt has begun to feel that it has achieved, although only relatively, one of its war aims by involving America in a political settlement because America knows that the tense situation in the region would not serve its interests in the long run. Public explanations by the Egyptian leadership stress that it is undertaking a political settlement on the basis of resolution 242 out of relative victory rather than defeat. This self-delusion is a significant propellant towards settlement. It is necessary to consider all the possibilities that the region faces in the short and long-terms. Is a settlement inevitable? Will any scheme formulated by the Palestinians and the Arabs on their own be able to avert or stop it? This is a subject which must be considered if the Palestinian Revolution is to play a specific and an effective role.

In spite of the sweeping international pressures towards a settlement, there are objective obstacles. The first of these is the contradiction between the Israeli viewpoint (represented by

the ruling coalition Ma'raakh) and the Arab point of view (represented by Sadat) on the nature of a settlement.

How does the present Israeli leadership conceive of the problem of land and security? How does it perceive the effect of any radical withdrawal from lands occupied after the fifth of June on the morale of the masses in Israeli society? The problem of land — Jerusalem, Sharm al-Sheikh, the Golan Heights, and the Qalqilya region — will be a very important and sensitive problem to the ruling powers in Israel who will be invited to the Geneva Conference. These Israeli forces will be effective in influencing the talks. Leaving aside the Israel Galili document drawn up before the war, what do we find in the Fourteen Point Document [the Labour Party platform before the October war]? It leaves the door open for the Israeli leadership, to be flexible in interpreting it within certain limits. Looking at this document item-by-item and considering the possible concessions which Israel may have to offer under international pressure, there is a real question as to whether Arab officialdom participating in the settlement will be satisfied. Here lies another obstacle.

This impediment will be slight if the U.S. and U.S.S.R. agree on a detailed settlement and the full implementation of resolution 242. Why? Because the U.S. will put pressure on Israel which will in turn give in. Dayan, despite all his arrogance, responded to criticisms directed against Israel's acceptance of resolutions 338 and 339 by insisting that it «could not continue the war without depending on America and without the closest links with it.» The same thing applies to Arab official leadership. Since it cannot conceive of its struggle against the enemy along Vietnamese lines where the masses dug trenches, fought with every type of weapon, and protected themselves against a barbarous enemy, then it would not be able to resist international pressures. As long as this leadership conceives of the struggle in terms of MIG-21s and MIG-23s, it will not be able to freely move in the international setting. If there is a detailed American-Soviet agreement on the implementation of resolution 242, then the first

obstacle for those who want settlement would be simple and easily surmountable.

The second obstacle involves a limited contradiction between the American and Soviet formulas on implementing resolution 242. By linking the first and second obstacles and by adding to both the subjective factor of Palestinian and Arab revolutionary action, one cannot conclude that a settlement is 100% inevitable or that opposition is useless.

The danger of this settlement exceeds the danger of any other we have faced so far since June 5, 1967. It is important not to underestimate the new international setting. Consideration of objective hindrances and scientific evaluation of the subjective factor and its potentiality for influencing events are essential. Two alternatives face us: either giving-in to events or comprehending the nature of the settlement coupled with the obstacles to its realization. If we opt for the latter, then we would have to introduce the subjective factor that would prevent or hinder the settlement or induce it to take a different form.

The regional and international changes after the October war constitute a proper vantage point from which events can clearly be seen. I want to follow the format of discussion presented at the beginning of the panel, because it is an excellent and comprehensive way to proceed. Do we recognize the occurrence of such changes? My response is that it is necessary to examine these changes. We cannot be scientific revolutionaries able to learn from experience if we do not acknowledge and stress their presence and influence. They, in turn, should become a source of revolutionary education for the leadership, cadres, and Palestinian and Arab masses. This experience forms a new departure point, especially for discerning the emergent trends after the October war.

What is the effect of these international transformations on Palestinian strategy and tactics? They have shown that the goal of the Palestinian Revolution is not merely a just and legitimate one but an attainable one. We have not been living in a dream-

world because we have been specifying a sound political line, establishing a revolutionary organization and mobilizing the Arab and Palestinian masses for the realization of our goal. These changes of Palestinian strategy have proven the soundness of its basic objective of establishing a democratic society on Palestinian soil.

Their effect on Palestinian tactics is linked to the second question which deals with the Geneva Conference - should we go or not? If we do not go, what is to be done? Here the new conditions that followed the October war must be taken into consideration. However, I want to briefly comment on the second part of this same question.

Should these changes make it necessary to pursue our goals through step-by-step action? Does this gradual process contradict our historical right to Palestine? Any discussion of revolutionary action on a theoretical plane reveals that the gradual process has been relevant, scientific, and legitimate as has been shown by the great revolutionary experiments of the world — the October Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, and the Vietnamese Revolution. Lenin's writings and pronouncements on the necessity for any revolution to make compromises and to take steps backwards are well-known. As he suggested, compromises cannot be looked upon abstractly. There is a difference between one type of compromise and another, and they must be dealt with concretely. A theoretical answer in one context is different from that in another. It may be wrong to consider those who reject compromises out of legitimate fears as being idealistic and romantic. We should not pick up general revolutionary principles which allow gradualism, stage-by-stage actions and compromises and apply them indiscriminately to specific times and specific contexts.

This observation leads us to the assessment of the coming stage initiated by the Geneva Conference. What are the positions and programs in this stage? A look at the Geneva Conference will clarify this. We are not facing an abstract theoretical question derived from revolutionary readings, but a specific one.

The questions we are facing must be answered in the light of concrete and precise study of this stage whose salient feature is the Geneva Conference. What position should we adopt? To observe and wait? Should we watch the course of events, and then take a position? I wish to register, out of a spirit of comradeship, my feeling that this is a grave mistake. Why? I admit that the Geneva Conference has a number of possible alternatives and consequences, but does this exempt us from trying to draw scientific conclusions about its outcome, if the orientation of our struggle is restricted to the political and the economic? We should not run away from this topic by any means. What will determine the outcome of the Geneva Conference? In Geneva, Israel will present its position. The Americans and Jordanians will do likewise. The three points of view will be very close to one another and it is possible to say that the conference will witness an imperialist-Zionist-Hashemite point of view.

Of course the Egyptians and Soviets will present theirs, too. We may safely assume that there will be a unified Egyptian-Soviet stand. It is possible to say that there will even be an Egyptian-Syrian-Arab-Soviet position with agreement on all issues. What will be the consequences? Can we consider the results as mere possibilities? Assuming that the outcome of the Geneva Conference will be determined by the discussions that will take place among the participants, we can say that it may lead to all possibilities and may end with completely differing results. Let us explore these contingencies.

Comrades, scrutinizing this matter is essential because we must reach a nonarbitrary and scientific conception of the possible outcomes of the Geneva Conference which will take into account the present balance of forces, for they will determine the final outcome. Conceiving that discussion alone will have an effect, then such a belief is utopian. The existing balance of power in the area has improved in the Arabs' favor after the October war within the limits described above. What is the result? From a scientific angle, a conference like this which aims at a settlement through peaceful political means will start with the American-

Israeli-Hashemite viewpoint as opposed to the official Arab-Soviet one. It will arrive at a point of agreement after dissecting the various positions and counterpositions. If we do not continue fighting (not in an adventurous, impetuous or emotional manner) and if we limit ourselves to the political and economic struggle (the oil weapon) can we not foresee the conferences' outcome?

Let us assume for the sake of argument that the Geneva Conference ends with the triumph of the Soviet viewpoint. What does it entail? The Soviets are friends, and their friendship is of concern, but like the Vietnamese, we must not allow our concern for this friendship to subject the interests of the Revolution to those of any ally. Much as I want to emphasize the importance of our mutual friendship and our genuine gratitude, we and not the Soviets, must determine our own program, for the very survival of the Revolution is at stake. We and our masses must realize that important differences may arise, ones which we should not ignore. Our Soviet friends have their own interpretation of resolution 242. Will the present balance of power and the Soviet viewpoint enable us — as some comrades imagine — to realize the goal of a national democratic Palestinian authority and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied Arab territories without the concomitant recognition, conciliation, secure borders, demilitarized zones, and international forces? My answer is no, because the Soviet position, which represents the maximum extent to which a favorable result for the Arabs can be attained at the Geneva Conference, has maintained (unless changed by the Arab and Palestinian Revolution) that a just settlement includes the continued existence of the State of Israel. Its stand should be made clear for our masses, as the Soviets have for our delegation in Moscow. Our position on Israel and its secure borders thus differs from that of the Soviet Union. Issues must be debated in a way which do not harm our mutual friendship. The Soviets ask us to take our own position; they have theirs and are not prepared to compromise.

Some of our brothers in the Resistance movement conceive of a democratic national authority without realizing what it

entails: recognition, reconciliation with, and the diplomatic exchange with Israel as the maximum demands that will be asked of us. Can our position — and I am not talking about our historical rights — be realized in the context of the existing balance of power and in the absence of an altered political, economic, and military program following the October war?

I have a clear answer to this question — it is not possible. Those who think otherwise are gravely mistaken. It will only lead us astray. Matters should be seen and explained to the masses.

I was told by one of eight comrades who have recently arrived from the West Bank that the Nabulsis are planning a celebration! Nothing is more dangerous than this. Celebrate what? This new situation? These new interpretations? These people must pick up guns. There is a big difference between planning celebrations and picking up guns, just as there is a big difference between the revolution adopting positions which lead people to plan celebrations or adopting positions which would impel them to pick-up guns. This is a very important matter. We are responsible for our revolution and for our people. Therefore, we must face the matter squarely. We are not talking about a democratic national authority in five or ten years' time, but are discussing it in the context of the 1974 Geneva Conference which is being held within the framework of resolution 242. This resolution has two parts. We cannot simply achieve one part and leave the Conference. For this reason I deem it necessary that the Revolution say no to Geneva. In the light of this analysis it would be risky for us to attend the Conference.

There are other very important matters I have not talked about. I have not spoken, for example, of the importance and sanctity of the Palestinian masses' rejection of the Zionist enterprise since the Balfour Declaration was proclaimed. It markedly influenced the course of events in the region, and provided, historically, the impetus for liberation. However, under the new circumstances, we should learn from our experiences.

By surveying the history of our struggle and extracting its

negative aspects, it is possible to determine whether this rejection by our masses was sound or not. Before the June war and the introduction of international factors, the Arab and Palestinian masses viewed the possibility of negotiating with the Israelis as real treachery. This must be recalled for the sake of our struggle and for the release of the potentialities of the masses. Is it in our interest to weaken or to strengthen their determination to continue the struggle? I did not talk about this, preferring a long, patient, and objective dialogue.

We are sons of one people, a fact we should not forget. We belong to the Palestinian national movement. We do not harbor any doubts about the contradictions in the region. The rules which regulate our differences at each stage differ from the rules that regulate our contradictions with the reactionary or Israeli enemy. Here lies the real source of my belief in the utility of dialogue and my real hope that we can, through study and specification, arrive at a very clear and detailed viewpoint — not necessarily my own — enabling us to confront the difficult situation.

Unfortunately the international community has not perceived the feelings of our masses. True, it is sympathetic to us, but does it live our problem as we do? No, after June 1967, a grave mistake was committed for the problem was posed simply in terms of Israeli aggression. World public opinion presently believes that Israeli evacuation will constitute a great victory for the Arabs. This view, however, is greatly limited. Therefore, our case must be advanced in a radically new way to the world. It should include our scientific understanding of the right to self-determination. Although it would meet difficulties and opposition from our allies, we could eventually win. There was a time when the Resistance movement was not taken into account by many of the revolutionary forces of the world. With time it won the recognition and support which it now enjoys.

The problem of announcing whether or not to go to Geneva should be closely examined. Since we have not been officially invited by the U.S. and U.S.S.R., we need not give an answer.

The serious and persistent Egyptian attempts to persuade us to participate in Geneva are well-known. Their aim is to provide a cover for negotiations with the Zionist enemy because the Resistance, which is the only force that has restored — after the June defeat — a sense of dignity to the Arab and Palestinian masses, has consistently refused the slightest indication of a willingness to negotiate with the Israelis. Our attendance in Geneva would be desired by Sadat in order to save him embarrassment while granting concessions to the enemy.

The P.L.O. has not yet taken a position on the Geneva Conference. Will this noncommitment adversely effect the cohesiveness of Palestinian national unity and the unity of Palestinian ranks? Will it undermine the morale of the Palestinian masses? Will it deprive the Resistance of its capability of action on the Arab and international levels?

These are not so much fundamental questions as they are tactical. The crucial issue is whether we can insure the sustenance of the essential factors needed for the victory of the Revolution. They consist of the cadres confidently rallying around their leadership, the belief of the masses in the Revolution and a clear political program. If we consider these as the fundamental factors in determining the future of the Revolution, then they should be the ultimate determinants of whatever decision we are to formulate. We have already and are still receiving reactions from the Palestinian level on a noncommittal stance.

As for the regional and international levels, if we consider the allies of the Revolution as the fundamental factor, then we should endeavour to avoid tensions. Could we not formulate our points of view in the light of scientific analysis acceptable to Arab and international allies?

I hope that emphasis on the masses and fighters as the fundamental factor is not construed as ignoring all our allies. Yet we should specify the fundamental factor in the light of which all the other factors may be determined.

I do insist, that we declare in clear terms our position on the Geneva Conference whether we are invited to it or not. The P.L.O. must take a stand. Why? Because if we want to study and debate this issue, we have already had enough time. The cease-fire has been in effect since October 22, 1973. We received the Soviet memorandum weeks ago. Egypt has on more than one occasion asked us to take a position. Although I may be wrong, the delay in declaring a position is due to tactical considerations. I hope that this will give the P.L.O. as a whole the opportunity to draw up an account of gains and losses of any posture that we may uphold.

The third area of discussion concerns the future of occupied Palestinian territories after Israeli withdrawal. There are two alternatives — return to Jordanian rule or the establishment of a Palestinian national authority. What does this Palestinian authority mean? Which of these two alternatives brings us closer to realizing the goals of our revolution and its right to Palestine? I feel that this question is wrongly posed. If the inherent danger in its formulation is not detected, it may not help us and our masses to take a sound position. If there are really only these two alternatives, as suggested by the question then there would be no need for discussion. For who would hesitate to rule out the possibility of the return of the lackey reactionary Jordanian regime. All the organizations of the Palestinian Revolution and the P.L.O. have taken a clear position against the United Arab Kingdom as proposed by Hussein. In our minds, there is no comparison between these two alternatives. Where does the trap lie in this question? It lies in the possibility that the Geneva Conference could lead to the establishment of a Palestinian national authority. In the context of the existing balance of power, Israel will withdraw and the authority will be constituted only under two possible conditions that it be either a reactionary or a submissive one. Would Israel withdraw from the West-Bank with only a goodbye? This is not possible. This might happen after another program of struggle by us. Since Israel will not withdraw unless it is replaced by a reactionary or submissive authority,

the question for the Resistance is whether it will allow itself to become submissive. We are left with a final question, what is the program of action? We have not reached a deadlock, for we have the Syrian rejection, from which we can benefit to a great extent.

The Syrian rejection is not a simple issue. There is an objective difference between the positions of Egypt and Syria for the issues of Sinai and the Golan are markedly different, with the former being easier to deal with. I have not forgotten the subjective basis of the Syrian rejection which is relevant. Unlike Egypt, there may be a Syrian leadership for whom it is not possible to deviate from the line of struggle drawn by the masses in the past fifty years.

Why did Syria refuse? This should be our point of departure if we do not want our position to be mere words on a scrap of paper. If the P.L.O. unanimously adopts a specific program it will not just be mere words, but it will, with the Syrian rejection, clarify the issue. Syria said no. Why don't we also say no? Both of us are facing the same questions: what is the solution? If neither of us goes to the Conference, what is the alternative? The alternative is the continuation of the political, economic, and military struggle in order to change the balance of power. This should constitute the basis of our efforts on the Arab and the international levels. We should make contacts with all the revolutionary forces in Iraq to make the rejection concrete, and in Algeria to make them take a decisive position. Let us contact all the patriotic forces who have declared their willingness to align their positions with ours. This is how we can reach an overall program.

Abu Iyad:

I do not want to add much to what my brothers have already said here about the effects of the October war on the Arab, Palestinian, and international situation. I will therefore deal only with those subjects which are of immediate concern in order to be aware of where we are headed.

The greatest mistake a revolutionary movement can commit is the inability to measure its magnitude. I want to criticize myself first, as a member of a movement. We consider ourselves as the vanguard of the Arab liberation movement, if not a vanguard of the world liberation movement. Actually we should be less modest and say we are a part of both movements.

Before the October war, we had our own conceptions and principles which we cannot deny. This true value lay in our capacity to realize them within the framework of a *raison d'être* not of our making. The October war brought us face to face with the necessity of devising a policy that would be oriented in terms of stages. We are in a state of confusion, not because some have rejected and some have waited, and not because the war led us into a position where it may seem that we are dispensing with some of our basic stands, i.e., recognition or conciliation with Israel. Dr. Habash has already elaborated on this point.

The October war has changed neither our principles nor those of our Zionist enemy. The Zionists had incessantly debated the boundaries of the Israeli state and finally decided on «Eretz Israel,» with all of its expansionist ramifications. Although they accepted to establish the state on the land they held [in 1948], they have not given up their historic right to all of Palestine and other areas.

Despite the changes brought about by the October war, the existing situation does not radically differ from that prevailing after the 1948 war, except for some features, such as the international situation and the fact that our Arab brethren have for the first time bravely fought in a way that has had its effects on Zionist society.

In 1948, the Arab governments — I should separate between them and the Arab masses — assumed responsibility for the Palestine problem. This was a mistake made by our leadership at the time. However, the position of rejection was not a mistake in 1917, 1922, 1926, or 1933, but a historical position taken by our people. The mistake was that Palestinian leadership did not maintain its leverage over the conduct of Palestinian affairs. It

is not a mistake for a people to reject giving up a piece of their land to an occupying enemy. The rejection should be made within the context of one national position. However, our cause must remain with us rather than with Arab regimes who are willing to make concessions at our expense.

There is an attempt, in my assessment, to take the initiative from our hands into those of the Arab regimes. This fear has already been expressed by brother Zuhayr Muhsin who said the P.L.O. may become a form without content if the state of belligerency is terminated and a settlement is imposed. The recognition which the P.L.O. has already received from the Arab states would in reality be easy to abrogate.

The October war has placed us in a situation that requires profound reflection. We should not obtain something for our people at the expense of our principles or out of submissiveness, but should rather look for a solid ground and an effective means through which the Revolution can continue.

As a Revolution, our cadres have not been oriented to the idea of a step-by-step policy. I would agree that the Geneva Conference has not realized any of what we are looking for. I do not believe that any person in the Resistance hopes to set up a national authority as a result of deliberations in Geneva, for that would amount to asking Kissinger and Abba Eban for their blessings. Our only demand is the establishment of a national authority on Palestinian territory which would be consistent with our struggle. If this demand is considered difficult, how much more would the struggle of liberation be! If we in the P.L.O. can agree on a minimum of demands that express the attitudes of the masses, including those of the patriotic Arab regimes, then we can embarrass those that are proceeding with concessions.

We do not think that a national authority can be obtained through the Geneva Conference, or that any patriotic forces would acquire a mandate over any part of Palestine. To imagine so would be visionary. We can realize our goals at this stage only by a joint struggle that would mobilize the masses.

It is known that we differ on some issues with our friends, be they Arab or international, old or new. But this should not prevent us from clearly stating our demands to them. I recall that the Revolution's delegation to Moscow discussed the democratic Palestinian state as well as the slogans common to the various organizations represented. Let us survey our options and see whether we can implement them or not. None of the Resistance organizations have opted for settlement, for it would have been inconsistent with our fundamental principles. The Palestinian and Arab masses are also against settlement as can be seen by their spontaneous feelings and continuous struggle. The decision to launch the October war was not ours, and it was definitely a limited war, not a people's war, which would have been different. The political consequences of the October war were calculated. Arab assessments of the Geneva Conference and the possibilities of settlement may differ, but the Palestinian Revolution would make a grave mistake if it misses any opportunity to establish an anti-settlement—a fighting front stronger than the pro-settlement front. The basic condition is that the members of the anti-settlement front agree with each other. The question facing us now cannot be found in our literature. We should think of how to face what may be imposed on us. Naturally, we cannot accept a submissive settlement. Therefore, there must be a program that will guide us in our struggle, and provide answers to our present and long-term problems on the basis of our historical right. If we had such a program at this stage, the question would not be one of going to Geneva or not, but whether we should ever consider the very idea of a peace conference. Of course, there is the possibility that such a program may entail going to Geneva and of appointing someone to speak on our behalf. However, we all agree that discussion would not lead to a return of any Palestinian territory. Yet the voice of the Palestinian people should be heard. Otherwise, others — who have been responsible for the perpetuation of the Palestine tragedy, who have shackled them in order to prevent them from acting and from expressing themselves — will speak on their behalf.

The Resistance organizations can draw up a provisional

program that could serve as the basis of decision-making on all facets of our fundamental problems. It could help us attain national authority without the signatures of Kissinger and Abba Eban. Such a unanimously agreed-upon provisional program would be common ground for our struggle. It could include a section on practical steps as well as answers to questions raised by our masses. It could also deal with the problem of national unity and of strengthening it. It could, moreover, enable us to confront the maneuverings of the American-Zionist-reactionary solution which aims at deluding us into taking stands that would only serve to enhance their interests. If we can reach agreement on this program, I believe we will avoid a situation which our enemies are counting on — a split in our ranks with unimaginable consequences. A unified Palestinian stand on the basis of a provisional program will increase our Arab mass support because our program would deal with fundamental, historical and immediate contingencies. It would also show the world liberation movement that we are a serious revolution willing to face its present and historical problems with realistic and revolutionary solutions.

Shafiq al-Hout :

Since I am considered one of the so-called independents, I should specify my political allegiance. I belong to the Palestinian people who aspire for the complete liberation of their homeland through the Arab nationalist struggle of which they are an integral component.

Therefore, the complete liberation of Palestine is of the essence of the movement. It is a grave mistake to think that the complete liberation of Palestine is the responsibility of the Palestinian people alone. Our revolutionary movement has been playing its role in mobilizing the Arab revolution, the Arab masses and Arab potentialities. I feel that our struggling Palestinian movement has made a great achievement towards complete liberation. One of its notable aspects has been the emancipation of Palestinian will from its earlier confinements and its ability to determine its own destiny. I do not consider that there are any

dialectic contradictions between the Palestinian Revolution and the progressive Arab regimes even though there may seem to be one on the ideological plane. In its relationship with the regimes, the Resistance has played a corrective rather than an antagonistic role, especially at the present stage. This point has been often repeated by one of the movement's organizations. Unfortunately, we are still divided, a fact which is, in itself, a hindrance to the Palestinian struggle. It could become disastrous if any of our differences leads to divisiveness, since the unity of the Palestinian people and that of its organizations are the major assets of the present stage. They also serve as a positive catalyst.

I would like to add that we should not forget in our discussions that we represent a people who have been dispersed in a number of geographical areas and who have been living under diverse political and socio-economic conditions. It is the task of the responsible leader, when taking a decision, not only to invoke his conscience and resort to reason, but also to take into consideration what the various sectors of the Palestinian population think and seek to achieve. He must also pay attention to the objective conditions under which they live.

The present stage is a positive one. Here I share comrade Zuhayr Muhsin's views that our stand is realistic rather than romantic.

What is being offered today, if anything, has been a result of the activities of the Resistance movement in the usurped homeland. When man begins to struggle, out of oppression, he will of course be compelled to pronounce unrealizable slogans. But when he, in concert with others, begins to apply pressure to influence events, it is bound to result in willingness by the other side to amend its position. This has happened to us, as was true of other revolutionary movements. The slogans that the Palestinians propagated were not all naive and self-defeating. They had a substantive basis in that they expressed the usurped rights of the Palestinians and their determination to regain Palestine. Their struggles have given credence to these slogans. Moreover, it would not have been possible for any Arab or international

delegation to speak for the rights of the Palestinians had it not been for the Resistance and its struggle.

The multiplex aspects of the October war have already been dealt with extensively by my colleagues. However, I will stress one point. We are not the only ones in a crisis situation as a result of the war. So are the Israelis. They are in a dilemma, at the moment, as to the means required to realize their ends. The Israelis and Zionists want all of Palestine; yet, today they have to make specific concessions. Similarly, while we want the total liberation of Palestine, we must take a position on the immediate problem facing us. The present crisis is not permanent, for the political situation in this area is dynamic and subject to radical transformations.

We are not reaching an end, nor are we arriving at a new beginning. We are at a new stage. We will have to confront other situations and crises on our way to total liberation. Yet at all points we will not shrink from formulating policies in the interests of our strategic goals no matter what the obstacles may be.

Now for the details.

We all know what is happening in the area as a result of the war. Each side is determined to attain its ends. Unfortunately, the imperialist and Israeli efforts have been more successful than those of the Arabs and their allies.

A responsible Palestinian leadership cannot presently take a negative stand on what is happening. We cannot say it does not concern us or that we refuse to be involved in a conspiracy hatched by aggressive liquidationists. We cannot absolve ourselves of our responsibilities. We have to take part in determining the destiny of our people. It should not be said that this is only an Arab task. Nor should it be said that Arab armies have fought and that their political representatives should do what they can while we wait for the consequences and then take a verbal, critical stand.

Such an approach is reserved for a historian, not a revolutionary political militant. This does not mean that we have to participate in a conference or in specific negotiations. Mere attendance may have value, but it is only one option. Obstructing its deliberations or arriving at effective decisions on the future of the Palestinian question are other alternatives.

Turning to the subject of the West Bank and the Gaza-Strip, as we all know, we have received no offer. However, certain possibilities have presented themselves as a result of the war. There are Arab territories that were occupied in 1967. What is to be their fate? Who will determine their destiny and that of their people? I know that these territories will not be granted by the Geneva Conference. Nor will it permit the establishment on them of a Palestinian national authority. Yet I also know it is our task to restore these territories to our people, and to establish a national authority allied with the Resistance that will be capable of continuing the struggle. Isn't this possible? Perhaps. Is there anything wrong with this demand?

Sometimes I ask myself which is more likely to disrupt the settlement — adamant adherence to a Palestinian national authority or the return of Gaza and the West Bank to the *status quo ante*? What will upset the Geneva Conference? To demand a national authority, or to propagate our disinterest in it, as the P.L.O. Executive Committee already has? On the propaganda and decision-making levels, which will thwart the Conference more: the insistence on our right to the territories occupied in 1967 without any compromise on our historical right, or simply asserting our lack of concern with the Conference? I have a sincere question — if we are compelled to take a position opposed to Syria and Egypt, what will be the consequences? Some are afraid that we might sign an agreement guaranteeing secure borders for Israel following the footsteps of Syria and Egypt. If we refuse, we will be confronting the two most important front-line states. It is my feeling that the rest of the Arab states will support Egypt and Syria and whatever is decided upon at Geneva, but we should remember that there are always sudden

changes occurring in the Arab world. Yesterday, we had two states opposed to the Geneva Conference. Today one of the two has become part of the Islamic Arab Republic under Habib Bourguiba who is known for his notorious position on total liberation. I am not suggesting that we put forth an absolute refusal. Instead, I am merely asserting that there are considerations which should be made in formulating our position.

In 1970, we passed through a horrible bloody experience. We were butchered. If we reconsider our stance in 1970, perhaps we would have changed our tactics, taking measures which could have avoided or at least delayed, the near total obliteration of the Resistance in its most important base, Jordan. We all know that total liberation will not be an issue for discussion in the Conference. Liberation is action. Total liberation of Palestine and the elimination of the racist Israeli state will not occur until an Arab revolutionary proclaims its termination in a press conference at Tel-Aviv after the Israeli military machine has been silenced. However, in order to reach this point we have to go through stages, for no question of liberation is solved in a single battle.

The Palestinian ideal of defeating the Israeli state in one military operation is a legacy from an earlier mode of thought that believed in the capability of Arab regimes to terminate the existence of the Israeli state in one blow. However, the situation has become more complicated for reasons known to all of us. The strategic goal of liberation has to pass through several stages. Our most sincere friends, the Soviets, as already pointed out by Dr. George Habash, support such a step-by-step political solution. I believe that dialogue between us and the Soviets is necessary and should continue. At the present stage we cannot expect any changes in the international position unless we undertake such transformations in the region. If we reject solutions proposed by our friends or take a hostile stand then we will be compelled as a people and as a national movement to struggle against all other peoples and states of the world.

Can it be inferred from my statements that I am in favor of

participation at the Geneva talks, that I opt for a Palestinian state or that I have no preference and will be ready to ratify whatever is decided? We must reach a wise political decision, which will take into account the present interval with skill and flexibility, in order that our friends, with whom we differ on assessments of the present situation, would realize that we possess foresight and that the future will prove us right.

Our strategy must aim at increasingly isolating the enemy and its support on the international scene. Moreover, I hope the Arab and Palestinian masses, especially in the West Bank and Gaza will not feel deprived of a possible solution because none is forthcoming. We should make an attempt and when it fails we will have proved to our people that they have no other choice but to continue the Revolution and to pick up guns to fight rather than to celebrate the results.

If we simply reject and denounce, without attempting to ascertain the reality of the positions already taken, then we would have lost much of our information and mass mobilization campaigns. We must not forget that our masses still constitute the first and last revolutionary resource.

I may be optimistic in asserting that from what I have heard from the leaders of the Resistance organizations, regardless of the varying modes of expression employed, we are capable of arriving at a unified revolutionary position, which will relegate to others the dilemmas of a settlement. It is not the Palestinian conscience that is problematic, but rather the capacity of the Palestinian mind to formulate a strategy for the next stage towards the realization of its legitimate goals.

Nayef Hawatmeh

When I spoke earlier, I tried to make a sort of introduction to our discussion. As a result I did not have the chance to comment on the views of my colleagues. Now I will try to be as brief as possible.

My colleagues have already specified the nature of the changes which have taken place in the region and the world after the October war. While there was broad agreement that the present stage raises the possibility of a political settlement, there were differences as to its scope. Some of us believe it is limited, while others, like Dr. Habash, have exaggerated its magnitude, basing their belief on what they consider to be the will of the international community. I believe that settlement is an impending likelihood. I have already clarified that there are obstacles which serve to hinder a quick implementation, so that it will take a year, two years, or maybe even more.

From our perspective of the movement and the realities of history, the settlement that may emanate from the post-war conditions would necessarily be a temporary truce, which may last a relatively long time, in the Arab-Israeli struggle. Whatever the form of settlement — be it of the submissive liquidationist American-Zionist-Hashemite form or even of an Arab form, which may include complete withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 — it will not endure. It cannot lead to the final solution of the Palestine problem represented in the Palestine and Arab-Israeli struggle, for while all forms of settlement are written in ink, they are the products of the sword's edge. Settlements contrary to the movement of history can never be eternal in character. All settlements and their accompanying covenants and treaties are necessarily subject to disruption once the balance of power between the conflicting wills of oppressed people, nationalities or classes and their oppressors is changed. A settlement will be imposed. It will bring about reciprocal conditions from which the Zionist enemy will benefit, such as a treaty of peace and an end to the state of belligerency, unless we are able to foil it. These conditions will temporarily consecrate a Zionist presence founded on national and class oppression and usurpation. The people of the area will necessarily reject such a settlement. The movement of conflict in the area will change the power balance once again in the interest of the Palestinian and Arab national liberation movement, which will abrogate these agreements by force, because the Zionist presence on the land of

Palestine is a settler-colonialist, racist, expansionist one whose roots date back to the colonial period when the alliance of the Zionist movement with capitalism was enacted.

I have another point on the settlement. Israel, armed with an expansionist racial ideology, was the product of a complete historical stage and a result of the marriage between the settler-colonialist Zionist movement and colonialist capitalism. The balance of power at this historical stage favored the forces of imperialism and world Zionism. In our Arab region it was tipped in favor of the forces of Zionism and imperialism, to a large extent, for the whole area was subject to world colonialism. All parts of it were ruled by feudalist and *comprador* regimes. The Arab region had not yet risen from its long decline which started with the Tartar invasions and continued through the Ottoman era. During this stage, the State of Israel was established (in 1948), expanding afterwards. In 1949, it took the Negev Desert, in 1951 Eilat, etc. The area began to witness a concrete, cumulative set of transformations as the world too started to witness an ever expanding revolutionary process opposed and contrary to the historical stage in which Israel was established. This revolutionary process has been inflicting successive, day-by-day defeats on imperialism, reaction, and racist entities. In our area, it inflicted defeats on imperialism and the local reactionary, feudalist, *comprador* regimes, leading to complete mobilization against the racist, expansionist, settler-colonialist Zionist entity.

Thirdly, at this stage of history, this process will necessarily grow stronger, because we are living in a historical period quite different from that in which Israel was founded. I believe we all agree that it is a stage in which imperialism will recede, the world will move from capitalism to socialism, and the world movements of national liberation will triumph.

Fourthly, the Palestinian and Arab peoples have an effective subjective role to play. It is to continue to struggle and inflict defeat on capitalism, local reaction and rightist forces. In turn, this would have dire consequences on the Zionist entity.

The intent of these observations is to clarify the following: unless the settlements that are to be implemented take into account the immediate and historical rights of the Palestinian people, they will certainly not be more than a temporary truce which may last relatively long according to the dialectic and dynamic laws of conflict obtained in the region and the world. Even a modern bourgeois like Pompidou, who has discerned the question of settlement far better than the self-proclaimed Arab Marxists, progressives and democrats have, affirmed in his last statement that any settlement would be no more than a temporary truce which will be rejected by the people involved. He did not specify why they will refuse it, but we shall do so — because this settlement will not achieve more than a temporary stabilization of coexisting security conditions between the Arab region and the Israeli state.

We all said there are various forms of settlement. There is a price for any settlement, be it the American-Zionist-Hashemite scheme, the Egyptian one, or the Egyptian-Syrian-Soviet one. Each form of settlement will have different results. We also said there are obstacles to a settlement. These obstacles are the product of the clash between the Palestinian peoples' movement with its desire for a national coexistence and for the liberation of all the land of Palestine and the Zionist settler-colonialist enterprise. There are contradictions between the American-Zionist-Hashemite solution and the Soviet-Egyptian (and possibly Syrian) one, and there are even contradictions between the American-Zionist-Hashemite solution and the bilateral Israeli-Egyptian one. Since these contradictions exist, we must specify with precision and clarity how we can profit from all of them, channeling them in the interest of the patriotic and revolutionary Palestinian and Arab position without false visions about their scope. We will see these contradictions as they really are, and use them accordingly. Egyptian contradictions with the American-Zionist-Hashemite scheme can be exploited if the Egyptian patriotic position that opposes American political penetration of the country is strengthened. This necessarily demands the solidarity of all the patriotic and revolutionary Palestinian and Arab forces against

bilateral settlements and for a common struggle to defeat the American-Zionist-Hashemite solution. If this is possible in the Egyptian case, is it not equally true for Syria, if not more so? The Syrian position, as I understood brother George Habash, who considered its stand as fundamental for our own, is not an absolute refusal; it is a position of «yes, but...» They gave a conditional «yes» to a settlement based on U.N. resolutions 242, 338 and 339, and they say «yes» to the Geneva Conference, but the settlement must take place on the basis of total withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 and of the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people (without specifying their content). The Syrian Minister of Information lately ascertained this stand in an interview with the Lebanese weekly magazine *al-Balagh*. If we want to strengthen our stand of unified struggle, we have to support such a position as more conducive to ours. How can we benefit from any other Arab position which adopts practical steps to strengthen the patriotic forces in Egypt and Syria against those tendencies that are not in solidarity with the Palestinian position?

Certainly we are not the only ones required to answer the question of what is to be done in the face of all those commonly recognized changes. But we are obligated to contribute an answer to this question. However, we must first answer it for ourselves in order to determine our position and role in face of all challenges and changes. In this way the Geneva Conference becomes the form and not the essence. Neither will it become the beginning of a new stage nor one of its prominent landmarks, but an arena. The essence of the conflict is not the Geneva Conference, but the question of what is the position of the Palestinian people and the Arab national liberation movement in light of the changes and the possibilities of settlement. As Palestinians, we insist on answering the question in order to specify exactly the role of the Palestinian subjective factor, which would place the Palestinian Revolution and people within the realm of direct historical action. When this question is resolved on the Palestinian level, Arab and international alliances will result in new forces which can be exploited in support of our position. When we determine our

role, neither the existing differences between us and Arab patriotic forces nor the differences between us and friends like the U.S.S.R., other socialist countries, the non-aligned states, or Africa, will harm us, for they are limited and not basic. We have a common denominator within the sphere of action which we have specified. We will resolve differences outside this common denominator by more dialogues and democratic struggle. In this manner, we will avoid reacting to events; instead, we will act upon them. We will escape being prisoners to alliances while at the same time mobilizing and employing them to the greatest extent possible.

We can clearly say that our position is so and so, we will do so and so, and we ask your support and solidarity with us within this framework. Certainly we will find forms of support depending on the level of our action and role.

We must specify clearly the central link of the struggle of our people and of the Revolution at this stage so as not to repeat the mistakes of the Palestinian national movement over the past seventy years. The mistake was not in our refusing all forms of Zionist presence in Palestine, nor in refusing the results of 1947, 1948 or 1967. The spontaneous feeling of the Arab peoples, among them the Palestinians, was firm and correct in continuously rejecting imperialism, Arab reaction, and the expansionist settler-colonialist Zionist entity. This rejection, though close to despair at the June defeat, did not make the masses of our nation give up, for they have a heritage in repelling aggressive raids as well as religious ones. The history of perpetual clashes with Zionism, imperialism, and reaction have provided incentives to the Palestinian people and the peoples of the Arab nation to continue the fight against hostile forces.

The October war gave our people and the people of the Arab nation new incentives which confirmed the fundamental nature of the Zionist entity — it was born in the historical colonial stage, while the world has entered a new phase opposed to it. We must act subjectively in this new stage so as to shorten the

historical process and not to submit to historical determinism. The war brought forth new factors in Israeli society, taking the form of revision of Zionist ideology. One indication was the result of the Israeli elections. The victory of Likud, in which it gained 20,000 more votes from the Israeli Army than Ma'raach, reveals that the military establishment has remained a prisoner of the overall visions and ambitions of expansionist Zionism. Even the readiness of the ruling coalition to accept a settlement is a form of revision of its well-known pre-October Galili platform. Certainly this trend will grow and will have a number of manifestations, such as the study conducted by the Education Department in Israel. For example, the value of Rakah's gaining one new seat lay not so much in its additional representation, but rather in its orientation. However, this trend is very slow because of the internalization of Zionism by all classes of Israeli society. Voices have begun to be raised, like those of Alyav in the Labor Party and Aharon in the Histadrut, arguing in favor of the recognition of the Palestinian people and the counter-productiveness of its complete denial. All these expressions are just seeds of revision of the colonialist Zionist ideology. On the other hand, we have the increased conviction and attachment among the ranks of the Palestinian and Arab masses against the colonialist Zionist ideology and the settler expansionist Zionist enterprise in our homeland.

The problem does not lie here, but rather in the fact that the Palestinian national movement throughout its history did not specify the central link at each and every stage of its struggle. It has continued to specify only the general strategic goal. I will clarify this point very succinctly. Before 1948, the leadership of the national movement did not specify the crux of the matter, which was the need to struggle and expel the British Mandate as a primary goal, for this would have guaranteed the resolution of the problem of Jewish immigration. The leadership fundamentally oriented the Palestinian masses to the struggle against Jewish immigration rather than against the Mandate. The people's potentialities were dissipated in the secondary struggle instead of being concentrated on the central issue. Consequently, the lea-

dership of the national movement adopted a perpetually compromising policy towards the Mandate, rather than enhancing the struggle against it. The leadership committed another error in not specifying its fundamental contentions on the eve of the Partition Resolution and in refusing the project of the democratic Palestinian state, demanding at that time a purely Palestinian Arab state, allowing only those Jews who were there before the Balfour Declaration to remain. Now, twenty-five years later, we are struggling to execute and achieve what the leadership refused in 1947.

Once again the Palestinian national movement could not specify the essence of its struggle under the conditions following 1948, which included the establishment of Israel, the annexation of Palestinian territories by neighboring Arab states, and the dispersion of Palestinians as refugees and guests. The Palestinian national movement missed another opportunity by not persisting in its demand for the recognition of the distinctive Palestinian character within the general Arab national framework, as the Syrian, Lebanese, Iraqi, Egyptian and other Arabs have done. The Palestinian people had a special patriotic role to play within this general Arab nationalist framework. When the Palestinian national movement confronted the post-1948 conditions, it lost its momentum and force at the same time. Consequently, it joined the ranks of the Arab national liberation movement ideologically, politically and organizationally. This involved a total denial of the special independent national character of the Palestinian people. In this manner, the Palestine cause practically and objectively fell victim to the purposeful dereliction undertaken by Arab reaction.

The situation remained in this state from 1948 to 1964, while all the vanguards of our people joined the ranks of the Arab nationalist and patriotic movements. The main body of what is now the P.D.F.L.P. constituted former members of these movements during the period when Palestinians were denied a national role in the struggle against Israel and in the struggle for national liberation within the general Arab nationalist framework.

We can consider 'Abd al-Nasir's attempt to form the P.L.O. in 1964, not as a move to disassociate himself from the nationalist role and commitment, but rather as the embodiment of his concept of the dialectic and dynamic marriage between the special role of the Palestinian people in their struggle against Israel and their role within the nationalist framework, as has been the case with other Arab people. This attempt compelled all Arab nationalist and patriotic movements to once more review the special role of the Palestinian people. The Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, in its Sixth Congress (1964), granted the Palestinian political character, represented by the P.L.O., a concrete content by demanding that it be set up on Palestinian territory, i.e., the West Bank, Gaza and al-Himmeh. It reiterated its position at the First Palestinian National Congress, held in Jerusalem 1964, as the manner by which annexed Palestinian territory would be reversed. The Arab Nationalist Movement was also forced to revise its thinking on the special role of the Palestinian people, leading it to form a Palestinian branch in the party. The same reason impelled Fatah, whose beginnings preceded 1964, to discuss at its leadership level the essential role of the Palestinian people who were excluded from the political arena.

On January 1, 1965, the P.L.O. was born. It constituted the beginning of the Palestinian national character. The unique role of the Palestinian people emerged. True, it did take time to develop. Then came June 1967. It enabled these preliminary attempts to reach their greatest extent, under the conditions of defeat. In the following period of 'no war, no peace,' the Palestinian national character crystalized. Yet, the leadership of the Palestinian national movement could not perceive the essentials of a new formula from which a basic strategy of successive stages could be enumerated for the complete liberation of the national homeland. Moreover, it was incumbent upon the Palestinian national movement to realize the necessity of the overthrow of the Jordanian regime. We could not, however, unanimously agree on this point until after July 1971, when it was too late. Before this date, whoever advanced this point as a step within the strategy of total liberation would have been told that the revolution could

not seize power, since this would mean its end. It was also maintained that the East Bank of Jordan was not economically viable and would pose economic problems for the Revolution. It was also said that Israel would occupy the East Bank if the regime fell. These were pretexts. Similar things are being said today about the West Bank and Gaza. Why is the overthrow of the Jordanian regime of central importance? It is because the peculiar situation of our people in Jordan differs from that in Syria, Iraq, Egypt or any other Arab country. In Jordan, an annexationist merger took place. The majority of its inhabitants have been Palestinian. From this fact comes the mistaken proposition of the ideologues of the Jordanian regime that it is ready to deal with the Palestinian Revolution as Syria, Egypt and other Arab countries have done. The root of this mistake is the failure to recognize that the situation in Jordan with respect to the Palestinian people differs from that of any other Arab state because of the annexationist merger in Jordan.

We are again faced with the question of what is to be done and the immediate necessity to specify the central link at this interval, in order that we can really struggle; first, to foil the submissive American-Zionist-Hashemite scheme which is based on no return to the June 4 borders, on the refusal of any independent national presence for the Palestinian people, on the geographical expansion of Israel and on the United Arab Kingdom. Secondly, to struggle and to oppose any Arab settlement based on suppressing the Palestinian national character at the expense of the Palestinian people's gains and immediate and historical rights, as well as any Arab settlement based on liquidating the Palestine question — a liquidation which will by necessity be a temporary one, if we understand the movement of history. The specification of the central link will also enable us to group all the patriotic and revolutionary Arab forces on our side in the struggle, and to strengthen the national position and tendency in both Syria and Egypt. There is the stand of a negative rejection of the *status quo* which does not concretely specify the present and direct tasks facing our people. There is another position claiming to be one of concrete revolutionary rejection which

specifies these tasks. Since we are not dealing with a middle or long-range, but with an immediate and short-run problem, which is the central link of these direct and central tasks?

Everyone agreed in the first round of the discussion that the possibilities of a settlement are to be taken seriously, especially as they have been given impetus by the October war. Some of us have maintained that the progress of the settlement is at best hazardous and foolhardy. Since we are dealing with an immediate problem, we must specify the role and the program for the struggle of our people. We should not be content with merely stating that the Arab masses will support and struggle with us. For it may not be enough, as was shown by the September massacres in Jordan. Notwithstanding the support from both the Arab governments and that from popular levels, King Hussein nevertheless proceeded with liquidating the overt presence of the Resistance in Jordan.

The Cairo Agreement was of no use because, like all other agreements in history, it was a product of the balance of power created by force, and when the balance swung in Hussein's favor he discarded it. The same thing applies for all the agreements concluded among ourselves. We prepared twenty common programs, all of which were abrogated as the balance of power changed. When a certain organization found that this program was not compatible with its vision and that the balance of forces was in its favor, it froze its cooperation. Only when the program was to its liking would it maintain its links with the others.

Presently, we are dealing with short-range problems. Our people and revolution have a role to play, based on concrete revolutionary rejection of the solutions already mentioned. This necessitates that we struggle against all forms of settlement based on the suppression of the independent Palestinian national character and on the liquidation of the Palestine cause — a liquidation which, from any revolutionary perspective, will not be final, but which will inflict the greatest harm on our cause and people in the short-run. Moreover, such settlements are based on the

American-Zionist-Hashemite solution, on reconciliation with and recognition of Israel.

The Arab states can counter the attempts of our enemies, and realize their ends without reconciling with or recognizing Israel. They can use the same logic which Israel has employed; namely, to secure international legitimacy for the Palestinians based on U.N. resolutions. They can argue that the rights of the Palestinian people are embodied in the U.N. resolutions including the Partition resolution and resolution 191 or the right of Palestinians to return home. Israel will necessarily refuse this, and no reconciliation or recognition will occur. Recognition of what borders? *De facto* borders established by force or «legitimate» borders as defined by the Partition resolution, for on the eve of the June 1967 war, Israel held 77% of Palestinian territory. The Partition Plan gave it only 56% of Palestinian land in addition to the demand for the return of the refugees who would have represented a continuous source of trouble inside Israel. It will not accept this so as not to tarnish the Jewishness or Hebraicism of the Israeli state because it knows the consequences of implementing these U.N. resolutions. The problem is that the Israeli leadership really possesses a dynamic, dialectic, modern bourgeois mentality. They plan accordingly, refusing any independent national Palestinian presence on their borders because of its total opposition to the Israeli state.

Therefore, we must refuse any settlement which, as I said, incorporates the liquidation of the Palestinian problem. The Arab states can arm themselves with international resolutions to thwart the process of reconciliation and recognition, reject any settlements based on suppressing the Palestinian national character, refuse any projects based on Israeli expansionism and reject any settlements based on new annexations, the denial of a special role for the Palestinian people, and the reversal of our status prevailing from 1948 to 1967 despite the rise of the P.L.O. and Fateh. How can we practically counter these moves? By struggling, mobilizing, and organizing our people inside and outside the occupied territories to attain the right to self-determina-

tion. We say no to the occupation, no to the United Arab Kingdom scheme, no to the return of King Hussein's forces, and yes to a struggle for the right of self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian national authority. It will enable our people inside the occupied territories to rally around one immediate national political goal — the uniting of all of its forces. This is the most effective way to defeat not only these attempts, but also other Arab settlements that may bypass the Palestinian people, liquidating their cause and suppressing their independent national existence. This would greatly arouse the determination of the masses to oppose these schemes.

We must be constantly aware of the thrill of excitement that our people experienced after two events; the first is the October war, which resulted in new motivations and possibilities to end the occupation and to attain self-determination under an independent national Palestinian authority. The other event is the decision of the Algiers Conference which recognized the P.L.O. as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

We demand first and foremost our self-determination, after which we will deliberate on our relations with East Jordan. Naturally when Ja'bari, (who dined yesterday with Kissinger at Dayan's home), announced that the P.L.O. is the legitimate representative, he did so under extensive popular pressure, and not out of any patriotic sense. The right to self-determination not only requires the solidarity and struggle of our people inside and outside the occupied territories, but also a struggle to expel King Hussein's delegation from the Geneva Conference and from any other conference that would deal with the fate of our cause. The Jordanian delegation is discussing the future of Nablus, Jericho, Jerusalem, Hebron, Gaza and the Palestine question itself. Only the P.L.O. and the Palestinian Revolution can determine the destiny of the Palestinians. Hussein's government, as well as any other, must be prevented from intervening to deliberate on our future, no matter how good or sympathetic their intentions may be.

We will persuade all patriotic Arab and international forces

to join us in solidarity around this position. Firmness in our ranks and support from friends of the Revolution are the best guarantors against maneuvers which seek to weaken our cause, liquidate it or both. Our determination and clear program would then constitute the framework for the struggle for short-term and long-term ends....

Here questions may be raised. Since, as we have analyzed, any proposed settlement will not insure the return of our territories, but only its transference to King Hussein, what must be done to disrupt this eventuality? In the struggle, either against Israeli occupation or against a Hashemite-Israeli deal, our people, when organized, mobilized and united on one position will rise against their return and for the establishment of a national authority. It is true that we may fail as we did in Amman in 1970. It may also be true that Israel would reoccupy the West Bank. We may be threatened in the future, as we were before 1967, that if we attempt to change the Jordanian regime, Israel will occupy the West Bank. After 1967, we were told that if the regime in East Jordan were overthrown, Israel would occupy the East Bank which we would not be able to defend. We reject capitulation to these threats. We have specified a central goal around which our people can fight, for their rights against the settlements that are being proposed and for the realization of the unity of our people with patriotic forces in Jordan. Those who reject our stand at the present claim that this national authority would not be economically viable. This position is painful and humorous at the same time. Are we choosing or recovering a homeland? We are fighting for what is our land, even if it were a barren desert in which only thorns grew. Why do people struggle for the overthrow of Hussein's regime when the economic potentiality of East Jordan is even less than that of the West Bank and Gaza? This is not the point. This is our homeland; this is how it is. We are recovering it, not choosing an economically, demographically, militarily and politically integrated entity. It may be said that it will be a confined area, and some may wonder whether it can survive. True, it will be confined if we recover it. But it will shorten by very many years the eventual

overthrow of Hussein's regime, while his return to the West Bank and maybe Gaza would enable him to survive an additional ten to fifteen years. Although this area will be confined, it has a mass base of 900,000 in East Jordan in addition to the patriotic Jordanian forces. The situation in the East Bank will be contained by us, Syria and Iraq.

This will be our course of struggle. If we can thwart these settlements, so be it.... We are struggling to obtain the recognition that we represent the Palestinian people and that we have the right to self-determination. Such a course of struggle, based on concrete rejection, would secure Arab and world solidarity.

If we cannot struggle to establish a democratic national authority, how can we foil a rash settlement implemented in spite of our protestations? What is easier? This is a question of struggle. Struggle for the complete liberation of the homeland is a long-range historical issue interlinked with the conditions of a specific historical stage. The closer and more realizable way to achieve this is by attaining the right of self-determination and the establishment of a democratic authority.

With a well-conceived program we can preserve and protect the Resistance rather than expose it to extermination. We would remain in an active, continual position of struggle both against the Zionist enemy and with the Arab liberation movement against imperialism, Zionism and reaction.

I consider that the question of the future of Palestinian territory constitutes the essence of the issue. Why? If it is stressed, then it can serve to counter the numerous forms of settlement. At the same time, organization and mobilization of our people for struggle will enable us to confront and prevent Hussein's return, and will secure the establishment of a national authority. We may succeed and we may not. Yet we must struggle....

If we can assert our presence and influence, then we will have a new weapon that will enable us to foil all these settlements made at the expense of our rights. In this case we could

really say that as the determiners of our people's destiny we will choose what is compatible with our goals. Thus the Geneva Conference becomes the result rather than the essence of this stage. We will be much more able to act. Why? Because we will have already secured recognition from all parties that we are the determiners of the Palestinian people's destiny, and not Egypt, Jordan, Syria, etc. We stand in solidarity with whoever shares our national-patriotic stand which we will endeavour to bolster.

In this way we will be able to play a significant role and take immediate action. Without this, we would be responding with silent rejection, nihilistic positions not consistent with the requirements of this conflict. We should struggle to attain such a position through a concrete program of action. Certainly this is a process of struggle. If we fail to obtain the rights of our people through this concrete program and if a settlement is implemented by mutual treaties of coexistence that would freeze the Arab-Israeli conflict, and suppress the Palestinian identity and the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, then should we turn to underground action? Yes! Because our overt presence will be exposed to suppression and liquidation. Hussein massacred us in order to be able to coexist on the borders with Israel and conclude a bilateral solution. It can be carried out again.

In case a settlement necessitates mutual security and provides secure borders and stability for Israel, the Arab states will have to suppress or silence us. This is not our choice. If it is to be imposed on us we would have to resort to underground activity, as other revolutionary national movements have, in order to build up and organize forces that can combat those of our opponents and enemies. We would have preferred secret, underground action in Jordan rather than of the overt type which led to 25,000 dead and wounded from the ranks of our people.

Zuhayr Muhsin

I will start with a brief comment on brother Shafiq's evaluation of our dialogue. I did not understand the implication of

his statement that what he had heard can be construed as «the same voice within one cell of the same organization.» I accepted to participate in this panel hoping it would be a dialogue rather than a polemic; hoping it would lead to closer common positions that would aid us in formulating a new political program which would take into account the changes resulting from the recent war. If we are not prepared for interaction, then our meeting here would be futile and would lead to disruption and misunderstanding within our ranks. What is needed is a positive attitude if we are to get anywhere.

We must work together rather than maneuver to outbid each other. Some people are overly concerned with tactics. They try to find the necessary pretexts and excuses with which to substantiate their arguments and refute those of others. We are not yet concerned with the immediate goals of this stage. Rather our concern is to arrive at an understanding of the political or tactical means required to realize our goals which are not yet clear in the minds of many people.

I have a comment on the first question raised at the beginning of this panel — war is not a football match. The latter entertains the audience who leave the field at the end with no other result than pleasure or anger for a few hours. There are no social, political, economic or psychological effects. War, however, is something else. It brings forth decisive cultural, moral and economic consequences that inevitably reflect on the mental and psychological situation, as well as the general behavior, of all the participants involved.

The first round of this panel concentrated on the necessity to recognize the character of the new stage following the October war. We have been expecting defeats over the past twenty-five years. Previous wars have successively increased our feelings of humiliation and impotence. The most recent war is different. It is a turning point in the history of Arab-Zionist wars. It obviously has affected our behaviour and approach to fundamental issues. Now we are beginning to deal with our problem out of a belief in our ability to effect changes, rather than out of inca-

capacity to accomplish anything. Before the October war we rebelled and fought to prove to ourselves that we were capable of fighting, of persevering and of rejecting whatever did not conform with our basic natural rights. The mere mention of acceptance under the conditions of defeat created anxiety, alertness and fear. We felt that any slight achievement might entail having to evoke substantive concessions.

As a result of the war, a new feeling of self-confidence emerged. We switched from a policy of rejection to a policy of demand and acceptance; from revolution for the sake of revolution and fighting for the sake of fighting, to struggle for concrete practical goals. What is demanded under conditions of defeat, of course, incites fears and sarcasm. After the war, we are, more than ever before, in a position to continue the struggle and to change the balance of power in our favor. Planning a strategy based on successive stages has become very realistic. The Revolution must be cognizant of this; otherwise, it will remain on the romantic plane and be unable to face the post-war challenge. Romantic thought will not lead to advances, for it does not correspond to the nature of political action, where one must either take a step forward or find himself two steps behind. The consequences of the war have left an imprint on the new stage. They have affected our methods of thought and action as well as our previous conceptions. We will have to make the necessary modifications and carry our struggle one step forward.

Our dialogue started with the question of whether or not we should attend the Geneva Conference. This was not the most constructive manner in which to begin a discussion for it may be inferred that our chief concern at the moment is with the Geneva talks. The real question at present is what kind of a program ought we to formulate that would deal with all issues of the problem. We should specify a minimal program as I mentioned earlier. We Arabs, as well as our friends, have to commit ourselves to it in order to have a solid position with which we can confront the schemes of the enemy. Before we can determine the nature of this program, any dialogue on its

implementation would be a waste of time. We should therefore concentrate on what we want, and then discuss the methods and tactics of implementation.

I believe that the crucial problem for us now is to arrive at an agreed upon, precise understanding of what our goals ought to be, in order to redress the mistake already made — attending the Geneva Conference without a clear purpose in mind. The primary responsibility for formulating such a position lies with the Palestinians. The Arab Summit Conference has designated the immediate goal as the liberation of the territories occupied in 1967 and recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians as specified by the P.L.O. Yet, there is an attempt to evade determining what the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people are. We should not allow this. When others are unwilling to make a minimal commitment to the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, we should confront them with a program and obtain their adherence to it. It should guarantee that no Arab state will make fundamental concessions — such as ending the state of belligerency — before the immediate rights and goals of the Palestinian people are attained. Equivocal reference to the rights of the Palestinian people at this stage will give the impression that the Palestinian people and the Arab nation might accept much less than what the U.N. has specified in its resolutions. It is not true that our rejection of the U.N. resolutions prevented this execution, for even if the member states voted for them, the determining factor for their implementation would still be the existing balance of power, as was the case in 1948.

The P.L.O. has a responsibility to redress the course of Arab political activity by taking the initiative in specifying the fundamental points and minimal program which Egypt, Syria and the U.S.S.R. can accept. This should be our concern before we undertake to expose and foil enemy schemes because by having our own program, we will already be in a position of confrontation with the enemy. When you find yourself speaking the language of your enemy, you have to undertake a general reappraisal of your tactical approach. Of greater importance is

the necessity to know one's aims and goals before scrutinizing the enemy's stand. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Palestinian national movement to take the initiative and formulate its program which would incorporate the full demands of the Palestinians and the acceptable extent to which concessions can be made by any Arab party. The national movement must also make the necessary contacts with the patriotic Arab states and the Soviet Union to arrive at a common position. Any political move we make will carry weight. At the same time, we will evaluate any political action or move in terms of whether or not it contributes to or harms our program.

If we preoccupy ourselves with Geneva, disagreements and discord will ensue. It would also serve the interests of some Arab parties who are willing to exchange concessions for secondary gains. It is clear that the intent of the American-Israeli scheme is to obtain some gains by ending the state of belligerency without paying the price of total withdrawal or implementing U.N. resolutions pertaining to the rights of the Palestinians.

What I am after is that we concentrate our deliberations on planning a stage-by-stage struggle because no self-respecting realistic political movement can proceed without it. If we want to learn from the Zionist movement itself, we can say that the Zionist enterprise, as pointed out by comrade Hawatmeh, has been attained through stages, with each one considered as a step towards the others. When we ask ourselves to formulate a program for the present stage, we should take into consideration the problems our struggle is likely to face. In this way, our successes would be stepping-stones towards ensuing stages aimed at the strategic goal of ending the Zionist presence. Just as the Zionist entity evolved by stages, so must its end be realized through stages. I agree with brother Shafiq al-Hout that our previous belief in the ability to terminate the Zionist state in one blow was illusory.

The establishment of a Palestinian national authority must be understood as constituting the essence of the political endeavours of our, as well as all other, responsible movements. Any

revolutionary movement or revolution seeks to establish its authority; otherwise, its existence would be in vain. Authority is not an evil that revolutionaries should dismiss. A revolution is not worth its salt unless it aims at establishing an authority that can pursue the revolution's goals. National authority should be immediately established on any Palestinian territory liberated. It must assume huge responsibility. If it cannot withstand its challenges then its national character would founder. For example, the past seven years of occupation have created non-patriotic ways of behavior — such as attempts at coexistence with Israel and travel to Israeli cities and settlements. In addition, a wide sector of our people have been attached to the Israeli economy. This could deprive our people of their will to continue the struggle and their ability to maintain a solid national character which would enable them to reject coexistence with the Zionist state. Therefore, a strong authority would be necessary whose strength would be derived from mass confidence.

In the absence of a national authority capable of facing the challenges, I fear that the new independent Palestinian existence will fall immediately and directly under Zionist contact. Hence, the importance of looking for a formula for Palestinian national unity based on a consistent national position arises. This is the only way to guarantee the solidarity of the Palestinian coexistence and its ability to establish the national government or authority.

Since the conflict with Zionism, in principle, should not stop and since the historical antithesis of Zionism — Palestinian national existence — should remain, a new formula must be found to express the continuation of the Palestinian cause itself and the right of its people. This new formula must enable armed and other forms of struggle to continue when the state of belligerency between the Arab states and Israel is ended. If it were up to us, we would, of course, prefer that the settlement be implemented under more favorable conditions so that we could acquire greater gains and make less concessions. We should endeavour as much as possible to impede efforts aiming at a

settlement now, in anticipation of a more favorable situation such as the outbreak of a new war shifting the balance of power in our favor. This is not far-fetched, for a settlement is appearing to be more plausible than ever before due to the new balance of power between the Arabs and Israel. Israel will revert to its pre-October obstinacy. We should not ignore the realities of the past six or seven years, when we believed settlements were impending. We have lived this nightmare from the issuing of U.N. resolution 242 up to the outbreak of the October war. It was often rumored that the Big Two had reached a formula for settlement, that Egypt was a party to the Rogers Plan which was one direct cause of the September massacre in Jordan, and that a settlement had been formulated for implementation.

It is my assessment that we shall live in a state of confusion for a long time. Therefore, earlier obstacles to a face-saving settlement for the Arabs may arise again. Consequently, the immediate fundamental task to be considered is the preparation for a new war. Meanwhile, efforts to reach a settlement have not ceased. Syria refuses to attend the Geneva Conference for two reasons: 1) the absence of a minimal program agreed upon by the Arabs, and 2) the present international *status quo* that does not guarantee a minimum of justice with respect for the rights of the Palestinian people.

There is the possibility of resuming the fighting which would result in a settlement more favorable for us. In this case, the immediate restored rights of the Palestinian people would parallel the magnitude of the loss caused by ending the state of war. I agree with Dr. George Habash that the Syrian position could become a basis for impeding the settlement under the present conditions. The Syrian position could be bolstered to the extent that patriotic forces can be rallied around it. A consolidated Palestinian position, with favorable Iraqi backing, would aid Syria and dissuade Egypt from pursuing a possible bilateral settlement as sought by Kissinger.

I would like to refer to a point raised by comrade Nayef Hawatmeh, that treaties and agreements are not eternal. The

balance of power is not fixed. The former will be affected by geopolitical realities. In other words, any settlement will be temporary, depending on the obtained material conditions.

Lastly, I have a point on the French and European positions in general. Pompidou pointed out that any settlement will be a temporary truce. The French position has resulted in the French-Saudi arms-for-oil deal. Perhaps France and Britain have come to realize that they cannot play a role in the Middle East, unless they are materially present in the area. The U.S. and the U.S.S.R. can supervise the settlement because they have provided the conflicting parties with weapons. The British, French or European presence has not been felt in the area. However, their presence had an impact when they did supply arms. Israel received weaponry from Britain between 1948-56 and from France between 1956-67. Afterwards, it depended mainly on the U.S. which replaced Britain and France. Now France has attempted to regain its influence through arms deals with Arab states not directly involved in the conflict with Israel. However, the French comeback is at the expense of the U.S. — but not the U.S.S.R. — which should be taken into consideration in the future. It creates a conflict of interests among parties belonging to one camp; this conflict may be used to apply more pressure on the U.S. to reduce its role in our area. In the long run this new factor is likely to create more favorable objective conditions in which a settlement can be implemented at a lower cost and with greater gains. Yet, the main thing is that we know how to formulate our program at the present stage and how to rally the greatest Arab and international support for its execution.

Dr. George Habash

What is the purpose of this meeting if not to strive at formulating a unified political stand that would resolve the difficulties through which the Palestinian Revolution is passing? If we do not succeed, how can we hope to make our analyses and positions understandable to one another? The answers will reveal themselves if we are frank with each other and if we adhere to

an absolute belief in the exercise of the freedom of expression, without the fear of each other's opinions being misunderstood and misinterpreted.

We must make an extremely important point. We have to distinguish between any immediate program drawn up by the Revolution to redress a previous error, and the machinations that are being hatched to liquidate the Palestinian cause. As long as we do not make such a distinction clear to ourselves, to our cadres and to our masses, the latter will be justified if they express apprehension towards what they conceive to be a cover-up for our inability to confront those schemes which aim at obliterating the Palestinian question. If we all note this point clearly and responsibly, we will increase the possibility of understanding one another, in reaching a common position, and in mobilizing and revolutionizing the masses round this position. To answer the question, we must commence our analysis with the Eleventh Palestinian National Congress convened a few months before the October war. It promulgated specific programs for the struggle. Every responsible organization in the Resistance movement is supposed to have acted upon it and incorporated its essential features. The Congress platform condemned resolution 242, liquidationist settlements, and the establishment of any state on a part of Palestinian territory in light of its emphatic stress on the goal of complete liberation. With the termination of the October war, the Geneva Conference was convened. Some Palestinians began to talk of «the necessity for realism,» «we are fed up with negative positions,» and «we must take positive positions.» Is it any wonder, then, why the masses are confused, especially after the Resistance has been invited to Geneva? Is it not a clear attempt to circumscribe whatever remains of the Resistance movement and its revolutionary character? The masses realize that a settlement cannot be imposed, along American or other lines, as long as the Palestinian Resistance persists as their revolutionary armed force. Therefore, there will be serious endeavours to contain the movement by all possible means — pressure, force, persuasion and diversion. Our masses, cognizant of the mistakes of various national liberation move-

ments — especially of their willingness to settle for formal independence — cannot but be perplexed at the convening of Geneva.

Since the Geneva Conference was convened, dialogues and discussions of our positions — among the rank and file — have been engaged in, which are extremely valuable for they have contributed to the clarification of our positions. The most outstanding question, however, is how are we to determine the phases of our struggle for the complete liberation of Palestine? If we are in agreement as to this fundamental question, and if we want to differentiate between simple attempts to satisfy the Palestinian people and between stage-by-stage revolutionary activity to arrive at liberation, we must emphasize certain points. We should undertake a sound political analysis of the maneuvers against us, by American and other parties. We should analyze all the Arab and international stands, and ascertain the likely outcomes of the Geneva Conference. I remain deeply convinced, in spite of what I have heard, of the Revolution's need to specify a position on this course of events. Will it lead to any immediate national goal which we want or not? We must examine this question and present a clear and complete explanation to our masses of the Arab and international configurations resulting from the October war, and of the new challenges that confront us. The fear of a possible settlement has been expressed here in the phrase, «how can we thwart any attempts at settlement?» Although this question must be answered, yet it should be separated from another in order to avoid confusion; how can we divide our struggle into stages in order to arrive at the complete liberation of Palestinian territory?

At the Eleventh National Congress which convened a few months before the war broke out, the Palestinian leadership drew up a program with specific points in the light of an international plot aiming at liquidation, as I mentioned earlier. It is only natural then for the masses to be apprehensive and to raise questions on the course to be pursued in light of the outcomes and the trend of events following the cease-fire.

The second point concerns the central link in our struggle.

We must distinguish between what we perceive by it and what is proposed by America, other enemy forces, and the international community. We must come to grips with it from the perspective of the Revolution. I say this because the proposed solution — the Palestinian entity or a state on part of Palestinian territory — is a product of international dealings. Is a partial Palestinian state to be considered as the central link of our revolution at this stage? As was stated earlier, the overthrow of the reactionary regime in Jordan was considered as the prime goal of our movement. What is it now? Is it enough to say it is Palestinian territory from which Israel will withdraw and on which a national authority will be set up without making any concessions? Why? Are we to be merely content with this conclusion because it is closer to reality or because it constitutes one of our beliefs?

I raise these questions because of the objective situation in Jordan. Seventy per cent of the inhabitants of the East Bank are Palestinians; they comprise 40% of the total Palestinian population. How have we accounted for their role in the envisaged Palestinian state? Is their struggle to remain unorganized and without a specific goal? The central link at the moment need not be intertwined with what is taking place on the international level. It can be subdivided into two sets of activity. The first, resistance to Israeli occupation, in the form of political and military pressure, until it is forced to withdraw. This policy will attain our goal of evacuation without having to recognize or reconcile with the Israeli state. The second pursuit will be a concerted effort by the national Jordanian-Palestinian front to overthrow the reactionary regime of Jordan.

One of the sources of confusion has resulted from delimiting our central link to the destiny of Gaza and the West Bank. Why not include the two-pronged strategy mentioned above? Just as we are required to specify an immediate goal for one and a quarter million Palestinians inside occupied Palestine, we must also formulate one for the 900,000 Palestinians in the East Bank. As for the political goals or central link that are to be pursued and their consequences, I have another point to make. We are a

Palestinian national liberation movement. No matter how much we want to emphasize the independence of the Palestinian Revolution from reactionary or submissive Arab regimes, we seek the closest relations with the Arab liberation movement in any part of the Arab homeland. This can only be realized by adopting specific attitudes with respect to the national problems in each Arab state. This should be inherent in our positions. As a Palestinian Arab citizen, I have as much right as Sadat to express my opinion on the resolution of the national problem in Egypt. So does every Arab citizen. We must revise our thinking because in ten or twenty years we will have no power except our masses armed with political consciousness. We will be unable to achieve any of our goals except by generating this type of mass power. I fully agree with Shafiq al-Hout's statement that political skill is required. The subject of the tactics to be resorted to is essential, yet their consideration cannot be divorced from discussing, from our perspective, the fundamental political force of history — the people — which can only be dealt with on the basis of an integral, revolutionary, scientific political program. Revolutionary thought cannot be regional, but nationalistic. Consequently, any program for the present stage cannot avoid evaluating the conduct of the Egyptian and Syrian regimes. True, there are tactical considerations in passing judgments; however, our masses are waiting for the Revolution to take a stand. Our political program at this stage should not be limited to international proposals concerning Gaza and the West Bank, but should rather answer all the problems that face us. We cannot turn our backs and act as though nothing has been proposed. Like it or not, the masses will in turn pass judgment on the Resistance on the basis of our response to international and Arab proposals, specifically on the subject of the Geneva Conference. As a leadership, we can determine the scope of the Conference, but when can we do this? When we present an analysis and a political program for the Revolution which establishes a demarcation line between what is proposed internationally and what we demand....

Brother Zuhayr Muhsin has emphasized the need to specify the political goal first. In addition, I would like to stress the

means required for the attainment of our political ends.

Our political goal at this stage should be acceptable to the Palestinian and Arab masses as well as to the rest of the world. It has to be based on a program, which stipulates the evacuation of Israeli forces from the West Bank and Gaza, the overthrow of the reactionary agents in Jordan, our relationship to the Arab states in terms of the maneuvers to liquidate the Arab-Israeli conflict, and no reconciliation, recognition or direct negotiations with Israel. Setting this program as our goal necessitates specifying the means to implement it — a problem facing every revolution. I believe that the Palestinian Revolution must determine whether or not the present balance of power is favorable or unfavorable for the realization of its goal. Moreover, we have to reach a consensus in order to overcome the fundamental contradiction. If we adhere to our program, then the logical conclusion to make is that the present existing balance of power will not lend itself to the realization of our objectives. Political struggle alone will not be sufficient. This was proven by the inability of the Arab regimes, throughout the period between the 1967 and the 1973 wars, to have, through political and diplomatic means, one inch of the occupied territories evacuated. It is necessary to emphasize that neither political alliances nor the pressures of Soviet power will lead to the goal of Israeli evacuation.

As to the economic war, the parties engaged in wielding the oil weapon are incapable of a decisive confrontation with imperialism. Rather they are more willing to adopt specific tactical steps to implement reactionary imperialist solutions. These points should be propagated and made clear to our masses. Our only road is fighting and more fighting. This is where we should concentrate all our energies. The differences which seem simple are, in my assessment, of extreme importance. What shall be our orientation? How should we present matters to our masses and with what objective? These are the most important questions. When presenting the masses with any problem, the following question should be asked: What will be the outcome of the esca-

lation of the struggle of the masses? The Revolution should emphasize at every occasion that it is illusory to believe that we can attain our immediate goals through the Geneva Conference. It is equally erroneous to believe they can be realized through political struggle. Fighting is the only way.

If the above strategy is adopted, it will lead us to a detailed program with specific points. The urgency of our situation will induce the Resistance organizations to arrive at a consensus. On what do we agree and disagree? How do we determine our relationships? It is incumbent upon the Resistance movements to delineate these matters, in order to proceed with the organization of a political mass base in occupied Palestine, engaged in violent struggle, and the establishment of the Jordanian-Palestinian front in Jordan to overthrow Hussein's regime. It should then attach itself with the Arab mass movement, including the Lebanese national liberation movement, in order to shield the overt presence of the Resistance.

However, the most prominent point, at the moment, with respect to the Arab situation is the Syrian rejection. (Brother Zuhayr Muhsin knows very well the relationship between the P.F.L.P. and Syria. However, this should not dissuade us from formulating scientific and objective plans). We do not harbor any misconceptions about the extent of the Syrian rejection. I have already mentioned the difference between Sinai and the Golan Heights. There are other reasons too. The class structure of the leadership in Syria markedly differs from that of its Egyptian counterpart. While Sadat can move to the right in Egypt, the young Syrians, who may very well be the leaders of tomorrow, cannot bring themselves to sit with the Israelis at the same table. How should the Palestinian Revolution react to the Syrian rejection? Is her stand merely tactical? If fighting is inevitable, we should plan accordingly and should not allow ourselves to be merely satisfied with the organization of a negative rejecting front. We are facing a situation in which we must take responsibilities. The solution which we propose — continued fighting — can only be realized if the Resistance is united and

if it coordinates its position with Syria's. Afterwards, our political initiative should turn to Iraq and then Algeria. We all know there are Arab forces waiting for us to take a stand before they determine theirs, such as the Lebanese national movement, the Democratic Republic of Yemen, and Algeria. The Resistance movement should specify its position in connection with the Geneva Conference, and advance its own strategy contrary to those of the Conference. We must instead rely on human and geographical elements. There are fifteen million people extending from the Golan Heights and inclusive of Iraq. The October war has shown that such a political-geographic front with a leadership determined to pursue the conflict indefinitely, can shake the prevailing balance of power. It also showed that this perspective is not illusory but is the only way to develop our power. If we do not proceed along this line, we will continue to engage in political arguments on the manner in which we ought to confront Israel, which will only prove to be self-deceptive.

Abu Iyad

I would like to start with an observation. It is my belief that if the aim is simply a presentation of the points of view of the various Resistance organizations, without a give and take, then our presence here is useless. However, if the aim is to ascertain the facts and to seek ways to continue our people's struggle, then I believe we may arrive at a consensus among ourselves and for the Palestinian people, of which we are considered to be the vanguard.

I am not optimistic of the fact that our dialogue is constructive. To analyze any period, we have to evaluate the basic problems in light of the fundamental factors. The first of them is our people's struggle in 1933, 1936, and 1948. Maybe we did not have as large a role in the 1956 war as we did in the 1967 and October 1973 wars. We must read history so as to extract lessons for ourselves. What were the mistakes of our previous leaders? When did they and when did they not take sound positions? One cannot say that the responses made by our fathers were

wrong. They rejected occupation, the settlement of their land by outsiders and the establishment of a state on its ruins. Axiomatically, theirs was a revolutionary patriotic stand. Their mistake was adhering to our people's historical rights without adopting stage-by-stage programs of struggle under the obtaining conditions.

A few have presented the issues as if there were some who want to capitulate and others who want to fight. This does not serve the purposes of our dialogue, for such a stand is tantamount to a kind of intellectual terrorism which leads them to refrain from deliberating on the means necessary for the realization of our goals and from expressing their beliefs.

After the October war, did any Palestinian leader oppose the political program that Dr. Habash referred to and which has already been endorsed? None of the organizations has disowned it nor did any of them claim the political program and National Charter as its own. We all noted the changes in the international scene after October. The American side had more maneuverability than our friends. The Arab states planned only for a limited war.

We all agreed that the war brought about new conditions which we must objectively appraise. We must not abandon our previous positions because of the war's outcome for this could amount to forsaking all our principles. Instead we should look at the positive aspects of the October war which can be considered as contributing to our thinking on people's war, armed struggle, and the continuation of the Resistance. We should not ignore that the big powers and some Arab states have, through their coercive will, brought about a limited war that would lead to the resolution of the conflict through a peace conference. There were some Arab states which adopted this line beyond which they would not be willing to surpass.

Moreover, there is another problem. It is related to part of Palestinian land. It also confronts a sector of the Palestinian population. We are faced with fundamental options which must be

clarified. Any Palestinian or Arab who maintains that our sole concern is to thwart a settlement would only be exposing himself as a non-revolutionary and as one who has no deep roots with our homeland. As a leadership, we have not met here to determine the extent of our capabilities to obstruct a settlement, be it humiliating, partial or comprehensive. Also, we have not met to discuss settlement because, as my colleagues Dr. Habash, Zuhayr Muhsin and Nayef Hawatmeh have already stated, any settlement naturally involves mutual concessions, the imposition of restraints on our freedom of movement as a Palestinian people, as well as on the Arab masses.

However, if we ask ourselves whether we alone are capable of thwarting a settlement, and the answer is in the affirmative, then it is our duty to impede its implementation.

We come to the second option — the creation of an Arab fighting front to prevent partial concessions. Undoubtedly, there are many differences among the Arab states. We must exert every effort to strengthen the Arab position so that Syria is not isolated. If we do not, we would be committing a monstrous error. I am familiar with the discussions going on in Iraq. If Iraq wants to bolster Syria's hard line, and if we do not support Iraq's move, then we would be committing a grave mistake. Nonetheless, we must see things objectively. Do these options stand in the way of formulating strategies whose objective would be to thwart an imposed settlement? We have already spent enough time on the possible results of an impending imposed settlement.... If we conclude that a settlement will be the outcome of international will, coupled with the Arab configuration and the prevailing balance of power, we must present our own alternatives to these schemes... and adhere to them. In addition, we aspire to the overthrow of the Hashemite regime. Whatever is decided must be based on the condition that we are capable of undertaking it; otherwise, we will be faced with fighting situations that we are unable to handle.

We should stand on the same common ground in order to be able to confront those problems facing the area as a whole,

for the American-Israeli-Hashemite side is trying to impose the settlement it wants. To do so, we must place obstacles in its way. At the same time, it is not necessary to open fire on the Arab regimes which conducted the October war. Even though I am against such a policy; yet, we must take a stand on any move by them that departs from our position. The P.L.O. Executive Committee should meet to determine the basic program that must be followed.

At the moment, it is incumbent upon us to formulate a program which will include alternatives. We would then be able to resolve the uncertainties for the masses in order that they may be able to face the forthcoming challenges. Without this quick measure, taken as soon as possible, some of the American-Israeli-Hashemite schemes may be implemented. I maintain that the dialogue which took place earlier was not in vain. We could not but discuss our destiny. At present, we must stop registering, for the sake of posterity, our views on this or that regime. Instead, we should be preoccupied with action. This period is fraught with danger because of what imperialist forces want to impose on the area. It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to have a solid unified front in order to confront our adversaries.

Shafiq al-Hout

Perhaps because I am an independent, I have a genuine feeling that, despite the minor differences that have been expressed, we are still on common ground.

I have not yet heard any responsible brother or comrade who is ready to relinquish the historical right to the total liberation of Palestine for an immediate gain. The question which faces us is how can we safeguard our historical rights? Opinions vary as to the manner in which we should confront what Dr. Habash has called «the conspiracy.» We should remember that as long as the Zionist movement has not given up its ideology, neither the conflict nor the conspiracy will cease. Moreover, there has not been a revolution in the United States that has terminated

the imperialist spearhead in the region. Also, it is inconceivable that neither the Arabs nor, specifically, the Palestinians will ever disclaim their national goals. The problem now is how are we to confront the so-called new challenges.

The urgent question is «what is to be done» if the Geneva Conference succeeds? The Conference is the personification of the end-product of the struggle between pan-Arab and international forces that reached its culmination in the October war. I am afraid that the utterance of strategic slogans as a method of responding to immediate challenges is not very convincing. We are not yet at the stage of total liberation of Palestine, for neither the objective conditions are favorable nor are the means of liberation available. I cannot stand up to or change the course pursued by the Egyptian regime merely by raising the slogan of the liberation of Jaffa. Yet I can probably damage, overthrow or correct its stand by announcing that any concession, even of one inch of the territory occupied in 1967, is a retreat and betrayal of the thousands of fallen martyrs. If I ask the three million Egyptian emigrants from Suez, Ismailia and Port Said to postpone their return until Jaffa is liberated, then I would be fundamentally and tactically mistaken. What I fear is that the Egyptian regime will reopen the Canal in response to American demands. Hundreds of thousands of workers will be employed in the Canal area. Four cities are being rebuilt on the Mediterranean and Red Seas. Millions of dollars are being invested. The socialist line is being abandoned. Egypt will enjoy artificial prosperity inducing the Egyptian masses to feel that they have achieved something. This is true, but it will be at the expense of the historical goals of the Arab revolutionary nationalist struggle.

As a Palestinian, I am least embarrassed to talk about the present stage. We know our enemy. Support from our friends is limited. The Arab states, despite their declared nationalist positions, are concerned with regional issues and achievements. To Arab officialdom, anything can be delayed at the expense of the Palestinian cause. Even the liberation of the West Bank and Gaza may be postponed if only small segments of the Golan

Heights and Sinai are restored. True, nationalist thought and revolution are formulated by the masses. I agree with Dr. Habash that we have addressed ourselves to the regimes more than to the masses and their revolutionary movement. This could be due to conditions not of our own making. Some organizations had to deal with governments considered reactionary backward and even counter-revolutionary. The period that witnessed the rise of the Palestinian Resistance Movement, especially after the 1967 defeat, imposed new predicaments incompatible with revolutionary theory.

We do not possess answers for the present phase. We categorically dismiss any concessions or the relinquishing of our rights. If they are made, they will amount to treason. We may end as a revolution and as a cause, but the masses will remain and will continue the struggle. How can we face the conspiracy that is being hatched against us? The answer lies in the insistence on the West Bank and Gaza as Palestinian territories whose destiny must be determined by the Palestinian people. This does not mean that we would be giving up any of our rights to the territories occupied in 1948. The question of who will have authority in these areas is not of central concern. However, we should be wary of the moves made by Hussein and some other Arab regimes. We should reject tutelage, be it Arab or international. The Palestinian people are capable of fighting their battle and of wielding authority. I agree with brother Zuhayr Muhsin that authority is a historical responsibility. From the moment they have embarked on the struggle for liberation, it means that they are willing to shoulder their responsibilities. The Palestinians must continue to prepare for their ultimate goal of liberation. I share brother Zuhayr Muhsin's practical suggestion that we decide what we want at this stage. We are in full agreement as to our final goal of total liberation. At present, we are faced with new conditions. Do we declare our readiness for total liberation especially when half of Sinai is still occupied and Israel continues to declare its unwillingness to return one inch of the Golan Heights?

I agree with Dr. Habash that we have just as much right to express our views on Arab occupied territories as do the Arab regimes, parties and organizations who interfere with Palestinian affairs. There is no separate Palestinian position. This is the nature of the struggle. We cannot contradict the Syrian position at present. It is my conviction that we also cannot be opposed to any Syrian decision taken. Perhaps I do not approve of the Syrian position, but I cannot fight it. As long as we are all in agreement as to our strategic line, from which we cannot deviate, and as long as we will not concede an inch of land, and as long as we have confidence in one another, the leaders of the Resistance should meet at the highest responsible level to answer the question: What is it that we want to presently accomplish? How can we face the new challenges?

To conclude, I maintain that any talk that overlooks the requisites of the present stage is escapist. Blind attachment to the strategic goal, without taking into consideration the immediate period, is unsound. We are facing a new stage, specific proposals, and a liquidationist conspiracy. We must respond to all of them while assessing all the possibilities. If these schemes are implemented, what is our position? We have to organize the largest possible mass base in order that it can engage in the response to the challenges that presently confront us.

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